# THE EVERGETINOS

## A Complete Text

CENTER FOR TRADITIONALIST
ORTHODOX STUDIES

# THE EVERGETINOS

«Τίς φθονερώτερος τοῦ κεκτημένου βιβλίον ὠφέλιμον, καὶ μὴ μεταδιδόντος τῷ ἀδελφῷ πρὸς οἰκοδομήν;»

τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἐφραίμ

# THE EVERGETINOS

## A COMPLETE TEXT
## Book IV


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**CENTER FOR TRADITIONALIST ORTHODOX STUDIES**
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## Dedication

For Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle,
our ever-present guide in the desert and
our intercessory Abba in the City.

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«Ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν Θεόν, ἀγγελικὸν βίον διοῖ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς νηστεύων καὶ ἀγρυπνῶν, καὶ ψάλλων καὶ προσευχόμενος, καὶ περὶ παντὸς ἀνθρώπου ἀεὶ καλὰ λογιζόμενος».

τοῦ Ἁγίου Μαξίμου

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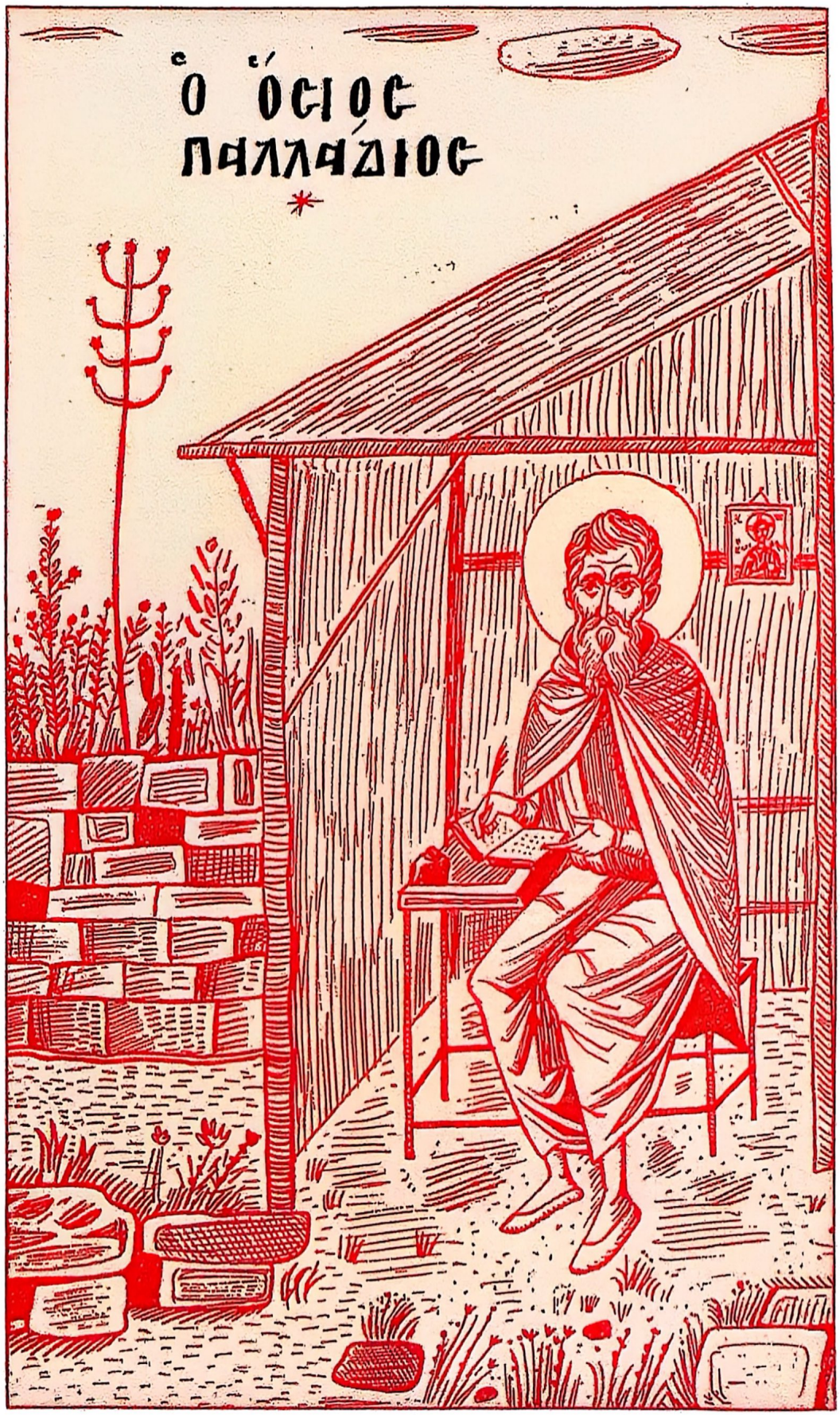
*Megalynarion of St. Anthony*

*Rejoice, bellwether of ascetic Saints and preceptor of the Angelic way of life; rejoice, thou who wast like unto a pillar of cloud in the desert, O all-blessed Anthony, boast of the Fathers.*




*St. Palladios*

## Hypothesis I

*That a monastic has vowed to live in poverty; what the sign is of one not wishing material goods; and how the Fathers succeeded in living in poverty.*

### A. From the Holy Palladios

1. St. Melania—the Holy Palladios tells us—related to me the following incident. "During my first journey [to the desert—*Trans.*], I arrived in Alexandria, having come from Rome. There I learned of the virtue of Abba Pambo from St. Isidore the guest master. Moreover, at my request, Isidore accompanied me to see the celebrated ascetic.

"Having sat for a short time in the cell of the ascetic, I offered him a small chest containing various silver objects, valued at three hundred *litrai* of silver, and asked him to take from it as much as he wished.

2. "St. Pambo, without even casting a gaze to inspect the chest, and continuing to plait the plants from which he made baskets, blessed me from where he was seated and said to me in a loud voice: 'May God grant you your reward.' He then called his disciple, Origen, and told him: 'Take this and take care to distribute it to the monks and monasteries that are found in Libya and Pentapolis and on the islands, since those monks are poorer than all of the rest.'"

3. Resuming what she was relating about this ascetic, St. Melania also said the following:

"After a little time, as his death was approaching, he summoned me, asking me to go to him. He was just finishing his last basket. As he did so, he said to me, 'Take this basket from my hand, as a memento of me. I have nothing else to leave you.'

"Shortly thereafter, the Saint departed this life, without falling ill and without the appearance of even the least discomfort."

### B. St. Gregory the Dialogist

1. A pious man, who was called Isaac, went from Syria to Rome. In

*Abba Pambo and St. Melania*

Rome, he sought refuge in the Church, asking the Church wardens* to allow him to remain in the Church as long as he wanted, in order to pray. In fact, he prayed, without ceasing, for three days and nights.

2. Seeing such a sight, one of the wardens took him as a show-off and threw him out, harshly insulting him and striking him. But, oh, the wonder! The Devil immediately came upon the warden and knocked him off his feet before this virtuous man, and the evil spirit cried out, through the abuser's mouth, "Isaac will drive me out!"

3. At this, the Man of God obliged the evil spirit and drove him out of his abuser. Soon, this miracle became known to the entire city and everyone, men and women, immediately flocked to this pious man. But among them, there arose an actual fight as to who would be the first to invite the man to his house. Indeed, to this end, some told him that they would give him land on which to build a monastery, some offered money, and yet others offered to cover the cost of his sustenance.

4. But this true servant of God, Isaac, agreed to take absolutely nothing and fled from the city. At a short distance from the city, he found an isolated place and there built a small and poor cell. In the meantime, many drew near to him and, by his example, were inflamed by the desire for eternal life and, through his teachings, voluntarily gave themselves over to the Will of Almighty God, embracing the perfect life of monasticism.

**C. From the Life of St. Marcian**

1. The great Marcian built, from the foundations up, the huge and incomparably beautiful Churches of the Holy Martyr Irene and of St. Anastasia. Moreover, besides these and many others that he built from the ground up, he restored a number of Churches. He was also the *Oikonomos* ["Steward"—*Trans.*] of the Great Church (that is, of Hagia Sophia). And because of his lofty virtue, everyone, from the Emperor, the people, and the Senate down, respected him and held him in honor.

2. Once, Marcian was returning to his home after celebrating the Feast of certain Saints, when rain began falling violently, soaking him. So, as soon as he arrived home, he closed the door tightly and removed his clothes, placing them to dry over a bit of coal that he had lighted.

3. By coincidence, at that very time Patriarch Gennadios had sent several persons to Marcian's house, in order to call him urgently to the Patriarchate.

Those whom Gennadios sent, finding the door locked, knocked loudly and called for Marcian to come out. Marcian, however, remained within and did not go out, since he had no other clothes to wear, and thus would have to have appeared unclothed. In the meantime, he called from within.

"I am coming soon, just be a little patient."

But he continued to delay them, so as not to have to expose himself. This aroused the curiosity of those who were sent to fetch him, and one of them, the most curious, decided to peek through a hole and see what was happening in the house. When he saw the line on which the clothes were drying and understood that this was because Marcian had no other clothes to change into, he was amazed, calling the others to look and to verify with their own eyes what he had seen himself.

4. This vision of poverty invited the amazement of all, who, returning back to the Patriarch, related to him in amazement all that they had seen. Hearing this, the Patriarch, knowing well the holiness of Marcian, not only found *this* amazing, but said to them:

"I am sorry for you, that you know the great Marcian solely by this instance; if you only knew the *many other virtues*—which no one else could easily accomplish—that have made this man marvellous and blessed in the eyes of many."

**D. From the Life of St. Anthony**

1. The Enemy of our soul, seeing St. Anthony's great care for virtue, and setting out to stop his efforts, set for him the following trap: One day, as the Saint happened to be returning to the mountain where he lived in asceticism, the Evil One placed on the road a large silver tray, which was, of course, an apparition.

2. St. Anthony, however, immediately understood this phantasm of the malicious Devil. For this reason, he stopped for a while and, casting a glance at the tray, tried with cleverness to test the Devil, who had transformed himself into the apparition of the tray. Pensive and idly mocking the Devil, he said to himself:

"How is it that there is a tray in this desert place? There is not any

path here, let alone footsteps from passers-by; and this tray is so large that it could not have fallen without attracting the attention of its owner. But even if something like that happened in a desert place like this, it would have been very easy for its owner to search for it and to recover it. Thus, all of the signs show that this is an obvious trap of the Devil. 'You will not be able to impede me in fulfilling my desire in this way, O Devil. And so you and your tray have come to naught.'"

As St. Anthony the Great said this, the tray vanished like the smoke of a fire before a strong flame.

3. Yet another time, Anthony the Great found some *genuine* gold on the road, which had fallen there. Either the Devil manifested this before him, or some higher power uncovered it for the athlete, in order to show the Devil that St. Anthony paid no heed even to real valuables. The truth of this issue—that is, who was behind the test of presenting the gold—he neither revealed nor have we ascertained. The fact is simply that the gold was genuine.

4. At any rate, at first St. Anthony marvelled at the amount of gold; therefore, he ran as quickly from it as one would if there were danger of a fire. And not only did he not look back in order to see it, but he deliberately fled a long distance, in order to escape the place where he found the gold and to put it out of his mind. He intensified this desire and literally ran, in order to take refuge on the mountain where he lived in asceticism. In order to erase completely his memory of the gold, he remained for a time in a small enclosure that, by neglect, had over time become filled with snakes and various other reptiles.

**E. From the Life of St. Ephraim**

St. Ephraim so succeeded at the virtue of poverty, that his very mouth became a witness to its richness. Finding himself at the last moments of his life, the words with which he gave up his spirit were the following: "Ephraim never had a billfold, or a staff, or a purse, or silver, or even gold coins; on the earth, he never acquired a piece of land. And this because he had faith in the good King, who commanded His Disciples, in the New Testament, to acquire nothing on this earth.** Thus, I, too, never acquired the passion of collecting material goods."

**F. From the Life of St. Synkletike**

1. The Blessed Synkletike gave her assembled nuns the following most valuable counsels about poverty: "Poverty, for those who can endure deprivation, is the greatest good. Those who endure it suffer in the body, on the one hand, yet, on the other hand, grant comfort and delight to their souls. Just as well-made clothing is washed and made clean the more that one beats it and wrings it out, so the more one beats and wrings out the strong soul with willful monastic poverty, the more it is strengthened.

2. "On the contrary, those souls that are ill in thought and show love for ruinous material goods come to suffer. These souls, as soon as they are beset even slightly by material deprivations, are lost; just as worn and torn clothing cannot withstand washing, so, in the same manner, these souls are lost, since they cannot withstand the harsh cleansing of virtue.

"Let us examine the example of the cleaning of clothes. The technique of cleaning and the technician may be one; however, the results will differ, for old and worn clothes are shredded, while strong clothing is cleaned and renewed. Truly, then, poverty is the most valuable treasure for the strong and superior mind, for it restrains, like a bridle, the practice of sin.

3. "For a monastic to attain to this virtue, however, he must exercise the virtues, such as fasting and reclining on the ground, that is, sleeping directly on the earth and without covers, in conjunction with other bodily hardships; and having struggled ascetically with these, and making *them* his possessions, he may then move on to acquire poverty. Those who do not follow this course, but abruptly disperse their money in order to achieve poverty, are often overcome by greedy regret, since money is the means by which one gains the delights of the present life.

4. "Do you wish to succeed at poverty? First attempt to cut off your bad habits, such as gluttony and the good life, and you will then easily remove the effect of money upon you. I believe that this is very difficult, since no one works at an art without using the tools appropriate to it.

"Therefore, how is he who does not succeed in distancing himself from what is prime in his life—that is, the desire for the good life—to hold firm in casting from his soul what is secondary, that is, the love of money?

5. "For precisely this reason, the Savior, when speaking to the young rich man, did not immediately and brusquely command him to discard his money, but as a good teacher and educator would do, asked him methodically if he had observed all of the prescriptions of the Law.*** It is as though He were examining a student, saying, 'Have you learned the letters of the alphabet? Have you learned to spell? Do you know the parts of speech? Let us advance, then, to the highest level, that of reading.'

"This same notion is found in His advice to the young rich man: 'Having fulfilled the commands of the law, go and sell all that you have, distribute it to the poor, and come and follow Me, relieved of the burden of the material world.'**** For certainly, if the young man had not assured Him that he had fulfilled the duties put forth by the law, the Lord would not have exhorted him to poverty.

6. "Poverty, then, is fine for those who have become accustomed to seeking the virtues; such persons, setting aside all of the useless burdens of materialism and unceasingly placing their hope in the Lord, confidently call to remembrance the words of the Psalm: 'The eyes of all look to Thee in hope, and Thou givest them their food in due season' (Psalm 144:15). These blessed people have made faith a foundation in their souls.

7. "The Lord addressed these same people, saying: 'Take no thought for the morrow' (St. Matthew 6:34). 'Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather unto barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them' (St. Matthew 6:26). And these poor people, having nothing, the Devil has few ways to harm, since the majority of sorrows and gains follow on the heels of incursions for the purpose of looting money.

"Hence, where there is poverty, the nemesis of our souls can do no evil. Do they have holdings to burn? Indeed, they have none. Beasts of burden to kill? Where to find such things? An opportunity to harm their beloved relatives? They too have been left behind. From all of this, we can conclude that monastic poverty constitutes the greatest victory over the Enemy and is the most valuable treasure of life."

**G. From the Life of St. Hilarion**

1. St. Hilarion the Great once cured from the scourge of demonic

vexation a *candidatus****** who was, in fact, a close friend of the Emperor Constantine.

2. The cured man, appreciative of such a beneficent act, wanted to repay his benefactor with a gift, offering St. Hilarion an amount of gold. At this, the ascetic took in his hand a morsel of barley bread, showing it to him and saying, at the same time:

"Those who use food like this for their sustenance consider the gold which you so honor equal to clay (mud). Therefore, take back, my child, your gold."

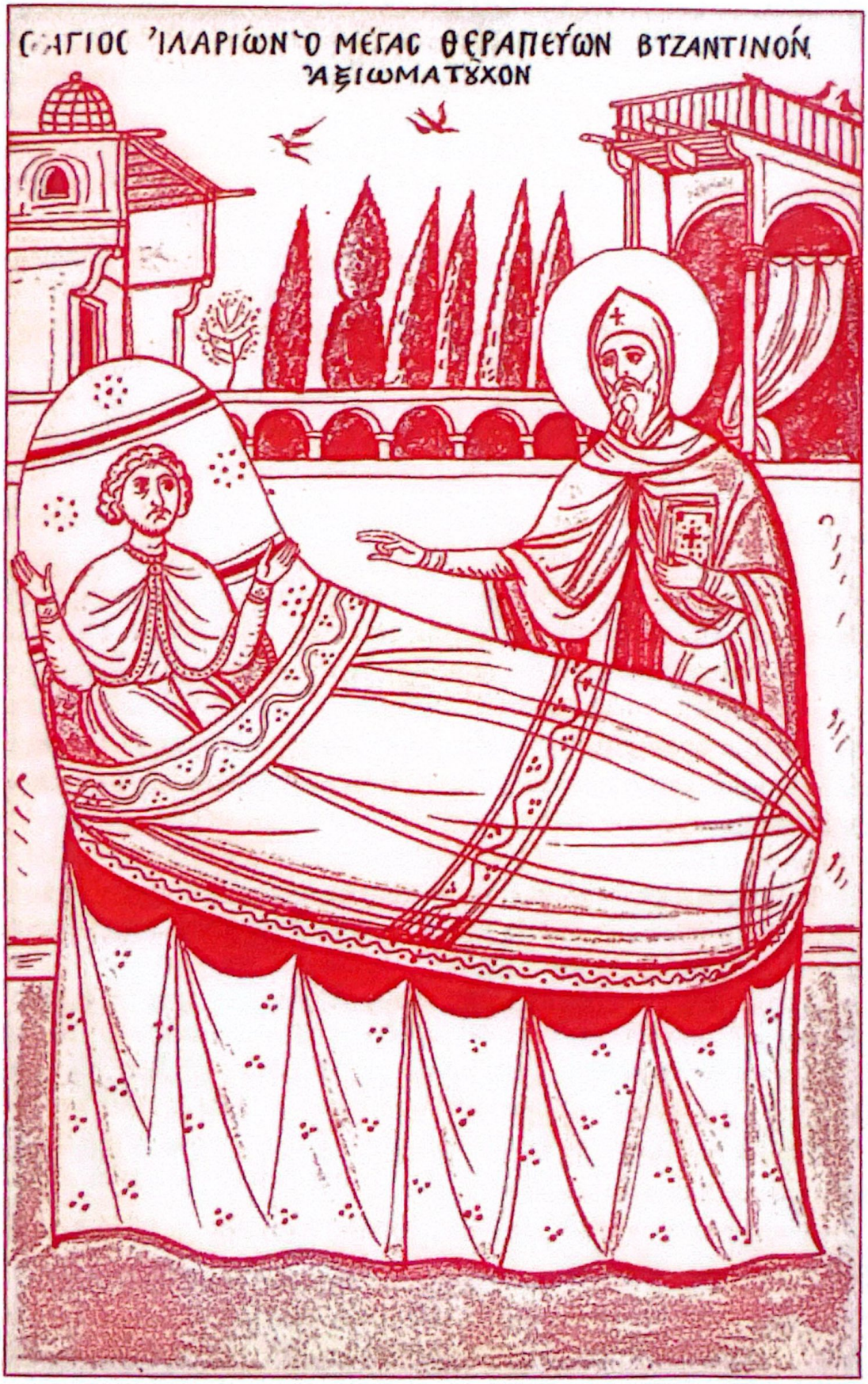
The Saint having blessed him, the officer departed not only free from his demonic vexation, but also with a lesson about fleeing lucre; this second benefit was not, indeed, secondary to the first, because for those who love money, avarice besets them in the same way that a demon does.

3. At the same time, St. Hilarion showed to the officer, by his example, that he who has God as his wealth has need of neither money nor any other earthly good. We are all given a good example by this incident: that the great Hilarion considered money and all material goods—and justly so—as the desired objects of individuals of base soul and, indeed, of little worth. And had he himself been one to labor for the ruinous things of the world, he would not have been able to perform miracles such as those which he did.

4. Likewise, the great Hilarion makes it known—to anyone who would have accepted this money—that the officer's offer was similar to proposing to the fastest runner, as a reward for his swiftness, that his feet be tied, or to trying to put clothes on a wrestler who has practiced fighting naked, thereby making it easier for his opponent to seize him during a match.

**H. From the Life of St. Melania**

1. St. Melania and her husband, Apellianus, had for many years been distanced from the vanity of worldly life. To do this, they distributed their fortune to almost all of the poor of the world. Thus, they went to Egypt, so that they could come to know, on the one hand, the holy ascetics there and, on the other hand, to distribute to the poor there, as well, the gifts of their kindness.




*St. Hilarion the Great healing a Byzantine dignitary*

2. Now, as they were visiting the various ascetics, they came upon a poor tent, which sheltered Hephaestion, an eminent man both in terms of virtue and with regard to the depth of his knowledge of true philosophy.

Entering into his tent, they greeted him and asked him to take something from that which they were offering to the others. He answered them:

"My blessed ones, I have no need. What would I do with money here in the desert?"

In no way could St. Melania convince the Saint to take anything.

3. So, having failed to convince him, she thought about leaving him something without his knowing it, since, though she *insisted* on offering him something, he refused to accept.

Finally, she carried out her plan. She pretended that she wanted to see the small dwelling of the ascetic, and so she began walking around it, examining everything with care. But there was nothing therein, save for some straw for his basket weaving and a small sack with a little salt.

Quickly then, escaping the attention of the ascetic as he spoke with her husband, she buried a small amount of gold in the salt. Fearing, however, that he might find it, she asked for the blessing of the ascetic and, having received it, *hastily departed.* However, her scheme came to naught.

4. This holy ascetic, as soon as he discovered her scheme, ran as fast as he could to catch up with her and her husband. From afar, he called them, holding in his hands the gold.

"Take your gold. I have no use for it. What can I do with it here in the desert?"

"Keep it, Elder," they said, "and if you do not need it, give it to someone else who is in need."

"There is no one to ask for it," the Elder responded, "because no one passes through this forsaken desert."

But since they would not agree to take back the gold, the ascetic threw it in the river and left.

5. As they related, other such ascetics, and not a few of them, avoided their money as though they would be willingly drinking the poison of some serpent or some other deadly potion.

**I. From the *Gerontikon***

1. The Abbot of a cœnobitic monastery asked Abba Poimen: "Elder, how can I acquire fear of God?" The Elder replied: "How can a monk acquire the fear of God, when his cell is crammed with jars filled with cheese and with various other clay pots with salt-cured foods?"

2. Another Elder, who was a monk at Sketis, resided near the mountain of Paisios. One day, someone brought to him a demonized man and the Elder cured him. Shortly thereafter, the cured man offered the Elder a bag of gold. In no way did the Elder wish to accept it. However, having observed that the cured man was saddened by his refusal to accept it, he emptied out the money and kept the empty sack. To the man, he then said: "Take the gold and offer it as charity to the poor."

3. With the sack, the Elder made a *kolobion* (a tunic without cuffs), since it was woven with bristly wool—and for this reason coarse—and wore it for a long time under his clothes, to subdue his body.

**J. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)**

1. Poverty indicates that the monk who applies it in his life is sincere. The monk who has no possessions resembles an eagle, who flies high above the earth. The monk who has not a single possession shows himself to be only temporarily on earth. Since he has acquired none of the temporary goods of this world, by this indifference to them it is obvious that he desires things eternal.

2. A poor man mimics, by his poverty, Elias, John (the Baptist), and the Disciples of the Lord. Like them, he can say: "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?" (St. Matthew 19:27). And he, like them, will hear that which the Savior said: "You, having abandoned all and having followed Me, shall receive a hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life."•

3. The poor man, then, appears to be living on the earth, though in reality he dwells in the Heavens; for by poverty he emulates the Angels and rejoices with the Righteous. Such a blessed man, who brings this accomplishment to fruition, inherits the Kingdom of Heaven and is shown to be an heir of Christ.•• Because, having gladly and voluntarily given up all material things, he has acquired, by this voluntary loss,

a field in which there is revealed the treasure of life, which was hidden, and has purchased the Pearl of Great Price.

**K. From Abba Isaiah**

1. If you have fled from the world to become a monastic in a monastery, but have a servant, should you continue to keep him you will defile the monastic habit. If, on the other hand, you give him to another brother, you will commit a sin before God. For this reason, you must allow him to leave or free him legally. Should he wish to become a monk, do not pressure him; let him decide for himself. Whatever the case, do not let him stay with you, since such a relationship is not profitable for your soul.

2. If you flee from the world in order to become a monastic, be careful not to keep anything from among those things which you had in the world. If your thoughts should suggest that you put aside something to do charity, since there is nothing in the desert, do not listen to them. Make effort to labor with your handiwork, in order to find peace in your cell, and eat with peace of soul the bread that you have.

**L. From Abba Mark**

1. It will benefit you nothing if you leave the life of the world and maintain in your soul voluptuous thoughts about material things. For what you did with your money when you were in the world, now, even without money, you will fall to doing by such voluptuous thoughts.

Again, a man who is abstemious in his asceticism, should he earn money, is mentally a brother of the foregoing man. He has the same mother as he—pleasure (perhaps indiscernible in his labors but known to his mind)—but a different father, since such a man is assailed by another passion.

2. There is also he who cuts off one passion for some greater pleasure, such as those who take refuge, today, in cœnobitic monasteries of a worldly kind;••• they cast off the material world and its apparent delights and are praised by those who are ignorant of their aims. They, themselves, may not even have an inkling of the deeper proclivities and inclinations of their souls, and thus they labor without profit and knowledge.

3. The source of all evils lies in vainglory and pleasure. And those who do not succeed in despising such inclinations and proclivities can never overcome any passion whatsoever. For it has been shown that the root of all of these evils is greed; it is, in turn, maintained by vainglory and pleasure.

**M. From Abba Isaac**

1. He who abandons the comfort of the present life has, like a spy in a foreign land, carefully investigated the afterlife. Contrarily, he who has given himself over with love and friendship to possessions and material things—such a person has made himself a servant of the passions. Do not think that acquisitiveness (the love of possessions) consists only in the acquisition of gold and silver; acquisitiveness is anything that captivates your will.

2. Love poverty and endure it without complaint, so as to center your mind away from aimless and dangerous ramblings.

3. Despise worldly comforts, which simply increase distractions, so as to preserve undisturbed the peace of your innermost thoughts. Pull yourself together against the many aimless preoccupations of life and take care only for your soul, that you might be saved from the destruction and dissipation of your internal tranquility.

4. By nothing else, except poverty, can the soul be delivered from disturbance by thoughts. Unless the senses are given rest from the incursions of the material world, and if the mind is not delivered from the passions, the soul will never feel internal tranquility and be moved; indeed, without tranquility of thoughts, the mind will not be moved to inner knowledge and the lofty contemplation of the hidden mysteries.

**N. From St. Maximos**

He who is poor is one who has abandoned all that he has and who has retained nothing of those things which exist on the earth, save for his body; and breaking his relation even to it, such a one has entrusted himself to the Providence of God and His care for the devout.

**O. From the *Gerontikon***

1. Abba Arsenios once became ill in his hermitage and was in need of a lamp for nighttime. Since he did not have any money to buy one, someone gave one to him out of love for him. Grateful, therefore, the Abba said: "I thank Thee, Lord, that Thou hast allowed me to accept charity in Thy name."

2. Abba Mark asked the same Abba Arsenios: "Is it correct to think that one should have not even some small comfort in his cell? I say this because I know of a brother who had a few plants in his small garden, but he pulled them out by the roots."

St. Arsenios answered him:

"It is fine, as long as it helps a person in his customary Godly life, that is, in the strengthening of the spiritual state of the soul and its progress towards virtue. But if a monk does not have the power thus to accustom himself to the struggle for perfection and to persist in it, he will instead grow other plants where he uprooted the former."

3. The following incident is told about Abba Agathon: He and his disciples labored for some time in a certain place to build a cell. Having built it and settled in it, the Elder noticed something, during the first week that they were there, that he did not find spiritually beneficial. So, he immediately said to his disciples, "Come on, we are leaving from here."

His disciples became upset on account of this disagreeable decision of their Elder, and complained to him:

"If it was your intention to leave here, for what reason did we endure so many labors in building a cell? Moreover, what about those who will learn of this and who will assuredly be scandalized, saying, 'Look, they have gone again; they are unstable and like an itinerant peddler'?"

4. The Elder, seeing them disheartened, said to them: "Perhaps, indeed, some people will be scandalized; but some will be spiritually edified, because they will say: 'They are blessed, since, for the sake of the love of God, they paid heed neither to what they had built nor to their labors, but departed.' Anyway, I am leaving, and anyone who wishes to follow me, let him come."

The disciples then prostrated to the ground and asked forgiveness, immediately departing along with the Elder.

5. About the same Elder it is also said that he would many times go

from place to place, having with him nothing more than his knapsack and the small chisel-like tool which he used in plaiting his handiwork.

6. And about Abba Gelasios the following is told: As a young man, he loved poverty and lived as an anchorite. With him, in the same area, several others lived as anchorites in similar ascetic struggles. Among these was a very simple Elder who was utterly indigent. Though he had in the last years of his life attracted disciples, he nonetheless lived, until his death, in a small monastic cell. Moreover, this Elder deprived himself of ever having a second tunic or of taking care for the next day's needs. To these principles, together with his entourage of disciples, he remained true until his death.

7. It so happened that, motivated by Divine force, Abba Gelasios established a cœnobitic monastery. Out of reverence, people offered him various lands for the monastery, which he accepted. For the needs of the *cœnobion*, he also acquired various animals, cattle, beasts of burden, and other such things.

8. The ascetic Elder to whom we referred above, seeing Abba Gelasios laboring in these things, and having sincere affection for him, with fraternal candor said to him:

"I fear, Abba Gelasios, that your mind may become fixed on your fields and the monastery's beasts."

Abbot Gelasios replied thusly: "Your own thoughts are more tied to the basket weaving at which you work than the thoughts of Gelasios are to his monastery's beasts."

9. Several Elders tell us that Abba George the anchorite wandered the desert naked for some thirty years. And many others among the Saints accomplished this same deed.

10. A brother asked Abba Evtropios: "How should I arrange things with regard to the maintenance of my body?"

And the Elder replied: "Eat plants, wear what is made of plants, and sleep on plant matter [i.e., straw—*Trans.*]. Only your heart should be made of iron, so that you will have the strength to disdain all things."

With this response, the Elder counselled the brother to consider all things contemptible and without worth, as though they were mere plants, and to suffer deprivation and satisfy his bodily needs with plants

and what grows on the earth.

11. The same Elder said: "Bodily needs (food, clothing, etc.) are material, sustaining the passions and soul-destroying cares. Thus, he who loves such items is wont to experience impediments and difficulties in his spiritual efforts. Now, if we should happen to lack some bodily need, let us acknowledge it and be glad, for we are thus relieved of bothersome concerns."

**P. From Abba Neilos**

1. Hypocrites, the greedy, and those who are voluptuous in this life resemble roses, which last just a short while and which one quickly sees trampled upon, as though they were weeds without worth.

2. Disdain all things that transform a man into a beast; for, when life is made dirty by sin, as a natural consequence the soul will also be soiled. In such circumstances, people must repent and lament, because they will certainly suffer punishment for their stupid acts.

3. Therefore, have no desire to become rich, or to be honored, for all of these things will destroy you—and we were not created by God to be destroyed. Consider all of these things corruptible; only virtue survives uncorrupted, and it is for virtue that you must be concerned. Indeed, by the lofty philosophy of virtue, man is shown to be God by Grace.

**Q. From the *Gerontikon***

1. It was said of Abba Julian that for nearly seventy years he dwelled in a small cave, without acquiring a single thing of this life, except for a hair shirt, a bed cover made of bristly material, a wooden plate, and a small jug for drinking water.

2. Several of the brothers once visited Abba Makarios at his hermitage. They found nothing in his cell, save for some water that was unfit for drinking. Out of love, they thus told him: "Abba, come along with us to the village, so that we can get you a few things."

He replied to them: "Do you know where so-and-so's oven (bakery) is?"

And the brothers said, "Yes, we know where it is."

*Abba Neilos the Ascetic*

The Abba again spoke: "And I know."

Once more, the Abba asked: "Do you know the (agricultural) fields of so-and-so, which are watered by the river?"

"Yes, we know those fields."

And the Abba further said to them, categorically:

"And I know them. So, should I be in need of something, it is not necessary for me to tire you. I can go by myself."

***From Father Paul Evergetinos***

Do you see the voluntary poverty and deprivation of the Elder? How, though the brothers could have easily managed to provide his necessities, he did not want this, but gladly preferred water that was not potable, struggling to satisfy his bodily needs with wild weeds?

3. It is said of Abba Megethios that, whenever he left his cell and the thought came to him that he should leave and go to some other place, he would immediately depart, without returning to his former cell. And this because in his cell he had not a thing of this world, except for a large needle that he used to split palm leaves for his baskets. And he made three baskets every day.

4. About Abba Silouan the following is told: Once the disciple of Elder Zacharias entered into the Elder's cell without his knowledge and, with the help of the brothers, moved the fence around his garden in order to enlarge it.

As soon as the Elder learned about this, he put on his outside cassock and, coming out of his hermitage, said to the brothers:

"With your blessing, I am leaving."

The monks fell to the ground at the feet of the Elder, and asked him: "Tell us, Father, what is wrong?" And they begged him to go back into his cell.

"I will not return back," the Elder said, "nor will I take off my outer cassock, until you have returned the fence to where it was before."

The monks, fulfilling the command of the Elder, removed the fence which they had taken it upon themselves to move and put it back in its former place. Only then did the Elder return to his cell.

5. A brother once inquired of Abba Serapion:

"Can you give me a profitable word?"

So, the Abba pointed at a shelf that was filled with books and answered him:

"What can I tell you? You took the money of orphans and widows and placed it here. An ascetic does not have need of so many books."

6. Abba Hyperechios said to his disciples: "The treasury of a monastic is voluntary poverty. Brothers, store up your goods as a treasury in Heaven, for Eternity is unceasing."••••

7. One time a wealthy official from a foreign country was visiting the ascetics in the desert. He had with him sufficient money. Addressing the Priest of Sketis, he said:

"Please give this to the monks."

The Priest answered him: "The monks have no need of money." But since the visitor insisted, he put the gold in a basket and placed it in front of the door of the Church.

Now, when the brothers came, the Presbyter said to them: "Anyone who is in need of money is free to take some."

For all that were there, not a single one took any. Indeed, many did not even take notice. Turning, thus, towards the rich and generous visitor, the Priest who served the skete told him:

"God has seen your virtuous intention and has honored it; so, take your money and distribute it to the poor." The man, much benefited by this example of voluntary poverty, departed.

8. A brother asked an Elder: "Will you allow me to have two *holokotina,*••••• so that I will have them in case I become ill?"

The Elder answered him: "It is not good to have more money than you need for a single day's necessities. So, if you keep two *holokotina,* then upon these you will place your hope. And if you should happen to lose them, then even God will not look after you. It is thus better to leave to God the care for your needs, for it is He Who cares for us."

9. Some Greeks once went to Ostrakine [or el-Felusiyat—*Trans.*]† to offer alms of love to the poor. They had with them their financial advisors, so that they could indicate to them who was in immediate need of help.

Their advisors thus took them to a leper. They gladly offered him money. The leper, however, refused to take anything, telling his visitors:

"I weave these small baskets; with this handiwork, I earn my bread

and I need nothing more."

10. Thereafter, their advisors led the Greeks to the home of a widow, who lived there with her orphaned daughter. When they knocked on the door, the daughter heard them from inside. Wearing a ragged dress, which hardly covered the private parts of her body, she opened the door for them. Her philanthropic visitors then offered her clothing and money. This poor and orphaned young girl did not agree to accept it, politely saying to her visitors:

"With the help of God, my mother found work today, and this will cover our food."

The mother of the young girl was a washer woman, and had indeed gone to work. When she returned from work, the Greeks implored her to accept their alms. However, the mother also refused, saying:

"God looks after me; do you wish to take this Caretaker from me?"

Having heard these words of trust in the Providence of God, they departed, glorifying God.

11. An elderly ascetic said: "A man who tastes of the sweetness of poverty will consider even the garments that he wears everyday a needless burden, as is even a jug of water. And this is natural, since he is more greatly occupied with other things."

12. This same ascetic also said: "A person who has not despised the material—how is it possible for him to conduct his life in accordance with the command of the Master?"††

13. Another Elder said: "Do not have folded up in your cell a useless second set of clothing, for this is death to you. Many others, who are probably more virtuous than you, are cold; but you—and especially if you are a sinner—why should you have extra?"

14. This same Elder also said: "Do not acquire more than you need and then leave it unused, for God will then no longer look after you. And if money should fall into your hands, and you absolutely need food or clothing, buy them immediately. In any event, do not sleep while the money is still on hand; that is, do not keep money with you. Immediately, before evening, distribute it to those who have real need."

15. And another time the same Elder said: "If you have a cell which

just barely shelters you, do not build one which is more spacious so as to insure your comfort."

16. The same Elder also said: "Do not let your fingers even touch silver and gold objects; that is, not only avoid thinking of acquiring them, but even if others should send you such objects, do not allow your fingers to fondle them, even if it is a small Cross or some other small thing made of silver or gold."

17. Again, he said: "Do not carry a handkerchief folded in your belt, for all of this will impede you from feeling contrition and spiritual repentance. Your bedcovers, your furniture, your underclothing, and your belt should be so shabby that, should thieves come to steal them, they would take nothing of what you have. All of the things in your cell should be this shabby."

18. A brother asked an Elder: "Father, how can I be saved?"

The Elder, in response, took off his *lebiton*,††† covered his middle with a cloth, and folded his arms in the form of a Cross. Standing thus, he said to the brother: "This is how a monk should be: completely denuded of the material requirements of the world, confronting the attacks against him by sin as if one crucified."

19. An ascetic Elder said:

"Greatly love poverty; do not desire to have valuable objects and various other material goods in your cell. When your soul seeks something and does not attain it, it sighs and is humbled. Indeed, in this condition, God intervenes and comforts your soul, granting it compunction. And when the soul tastes within itself the sweetness of the presence of God, it then dislikes all the more the body in which it is. If a man does not reach the point of disliking his body and considering it an enemy and opponent, limiting his care for it only to that which is absolutely necessary, he will never be able to be delivered from the passions of the Devil."

**R. From St. Ephraim**

A monk who loves material things is like unto a barren palm tree; contrarily, a poor monk is like a palm tree rich with leaves and which rises up to Heaven.

A monk who loves material things is like a falcon, which flies with leashes affixed to its feet, so that wherever it lands, it becomes entangled therein.

The monk who is indifferent to material things is like a wayfarer who goes forth happily, since he has no bonds on him.

* "*Προσμονάριος*": Church guardian ["warden"—*Trans.*].

** "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses. Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves..." (St. Matthew 10:9-10).

*** See St. Matthew 19:16-22.

**** "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (St. Matthew 19:21).

***** "*Candidatus*" is a Latin word meaning, generally, an officer.

• "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (St. Matthew 19:28-29).

•• "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we might also be glorified together" (Romans 8:16-17).

••• St. Mark calls "cœnobitic monasteries of a worldly kind," here, monasteries lying nearby to cities, in which are enrolled monks who, in contrast to the hermits and anchorites, live communally and without great deprivation, with regard to food and clothing.

•••• "Lay up not for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven..." (St. Matthew 6:19-20).

••••• "*Ὁλοκότινα*" is what these holy ascetics called the gold and silver coins of their time, both Roman and Byzantine, indicating by their word for them their abhorrence thereof: for "*κότος*"=*ὀργή, μῖσος, ἔχθρα* [anger, hatred, enmity—*Trans.*] (*κοτέω*/-*ῶ*=*ὀργίζομαι* [to become angry—*Trans.*]). ["*Ὁλοκότινα*," then, meaning, roughly, "those things wholly contemptible or which incite enmity and anger"—*Trans.*]

† Ostrakine was a region of Egypt, at the mouth of the Sirbonis salt marsh [the Bardewill Lagoon—*Trans.*], on the border of Egypt and Arabia Petræa, east of Mount Pelousios. This salt marsh does not exist today, since it has been filled in.

†† "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life" (St. John 12:25).

††† The "*Λεβίτων*" was the *rason* [cassock] that the ascetic wore to monastic gatherings (*συνάξεις*) of the monks. *Λεβίτων* = woven monastic garment.

## Hypothesis II

*Corporeal charity* is required of laymen, when they are not poor, since they enjoy endless benefits therefrom. Simple believers should practice this kind of charity with all of their might, offering the choicest from what they possess.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. I once was visiting Abba Joseph at Ennaton;** by coincidence, the sophist Sophronios [who taught rhetoric in Damascus and who is often identified, despite some recent scholarly doubts in this regard, as one with St. Sophronios (560-638), who later became Patriarch of Jerusalem—*Editors*] was also there. As we were conversing with the Elder, a visitor came from Aïla*** and gave the Elder some coins, saying, "Bless me, Father, that my ship, which I chartered and sent to Ethiopia, will have a good journey."

The Elder did not even look at the offering of money and paid it no heed.

2. So, Sophronios, seeing the Elder's indifference, said to him: "Elder, take the money he offered and give it to some brother who is in need."

To this suggestion, the Elder replied: "So I can thus be doubly disgraced: on the one hand, that I should accept money when I have no need of it and, on the other hand, that I should reap with my own hand the thistles of another? God grant me to be able to reap the thistles of my own soul. I say this because a God-inspired adage says that, if you are disposed towards sowing, sow from your own seeds; for strange seeds can be most bitter with tares.**** This is all the more so, my child, when the reason for charity is not the salvation of the soul."

3. With some surprise, Sophronios asked: "What then? Are all of those things which a man does in charity reckoned nothing by God?"

The Elder replied: "This is in accordance with the goal with which the charity is undertaken, since there are many and diverse circumstances in which charity is undertaken. One man offers charity to bless

*Abba Joseph of the Monastery of Ennaton*

his household, and God also blesses it; another offers charity for his ship, and the Lord blesses the ship with a good journey; another for his children, and God protects his children; yet another to be glorified, and God glorifies him. God disdains no one, as long as the soul of such a man is not harmed by what God grants.

4. "In keeping, then, with the goal for which charity is shown, God grants the corresponding supplication, even though this may be of no benefit to these people in the future life. You, however, as often as you show charity, should do so for your soul, and God will grant unto you what you need. This truth is written in a God-inspired axiom: '(The Lord) grant thee according to thine own heart' (Psalm 19:5). There are many people who have the idea that they are doing charitable works, and yet they provoke God in this instance."

5. At this point Sophronios, not grasping the meaning of what was being said, commented: "Father, please clarify for us what you mean by these words."

The Elder replied: "God, as we know from the Old Testament,***** commanded that there be offered to Him the first fruits of the agricultural products of the earth and the first animals from a flock, that all thereafter might be blessed and that sins might be forgiven. In addition, He commanded that the first male child of a family be dedicated to Him.• The wealthy, out of guile and cunning, do the total opposite; they keep for themselves all that is useful and valuable, while everything that is worthless and fit to throw away they distribute among their poor brothers. By way of example, the best wine they drink themselves; but the vinegary wine and that which has an odor they give to the widows and orphans. The best fruits they eat themselves and the rotten fruit they offer to the poor.

6. "They do the same thing with clothing. Whatever is new and usable they wear themselves, throwing to the poor what is old and all ragged. If they have children, they take special care that they are robust, in good health, and handsome, preparing them for engagement and marriages, while the ill, the lame, the one-eyed, and the ugly they dedicate to God and drive them into monasteries and convents to become monastics. It is thus that God, who knows our hearts, dismisses and refuses these offerings. Therefore, Cain, when he offered sacrifice to God, not only did not please Him, but provoked Him.

7. "So, people should reflect: When we want to honor mortal men, such as ourselves, we are mindful to give to them, as gifts, that which they will consider more valuable than any other. Should we not so much more, then, offer to God—our Creator, the Giver of all good things, from Whom we receive all of the things from which we make our offerings—the most choice and valuable things?

"When we wish to propitiate God with our charity, we owe it to offer, on His behalf, the choicest goods from all that we have available, so that God does not, to our shame, see our gift as an abomination and thus dismiss it as unacceptable.

8. "From the following incident, we may conclude that God accepts or rejects a sacrifice in accordance with the disposition of the soul of the one offering it: The sacrifice of Noah was well received by God, even though it was just aromatic smoke, since his offering was good and counted by God as a fragrant smell, as Scripture also says: "...and the Lord smelled a sweet savor" (Genesis 8:21). By contrast, the offering of sacrifices to God which come forth from the cunning intention of a person, even though it may include many fruits which appear to be rich and beautiful, are abhorrent and repulsive to the Lord, like the sacrifices and incense offerings of the Hebrews. God said to the Hebrews through the Prophet: 'Vain incense offerings are an abomination unto Me' (Isaiah 1:13)."

9. These are the things that Elder Joseph said to us during that meeting; his words much benefited us and we left gratified. As the Elder accompanied us to the outside door of his cell, he said to us:

"My children, I have need of you this next Saturday. I beg you to come."

Of course, we went to his cell the following Saturday, as he had asked us to do, at about nine in the morning. But we found him dead. Amazed by the clairvoyant gift of this ascetic Saint, we buried him. We departed, thanking God that he had deemed us worthy to perform the funeral of such a Saint.

10. An Elder said: "There are people who do much good in this life. But the Evil One inspires them to examine everything in detail and to split hairs about insignificant matters, that they might, despite all of the good that they do, lose their reward. By way of illustration"—this Elder continued instructively—"I was a witness to the following event: I was

once staying at Oxyrrhynchos, nearby a Presbyter who was handing out charity to the poor. Among the various poor people who came was a widow, who asked him for a little wheat. So, the Presbyter said to her: 'Bring me a sack, and I will give you as much as I can.'

11. "And, of course, the widow brought him a sack. With his hands, the Priest then assessed the size of the sack, verbally assailing the widow for bringing such a large one.

"When we were alone"—the Elder again continued instructively—"I asked the Presbyter: 'Did you sell the wheat to that widow?'

"'Lord, no'—he said—'I gave her a bit to help her.'

"I then said again to the Presbyter: 'Since you charitably gave her the entire amount of wheat that you had, why did you have to assail her by saying that the sack that she brought with her was big?'"

12. Abba Timothy the Presbyter consulted Abba Poimen, saying: "There is a prostitute who lives in Egypt; she does almsgiving by giving of the money that she makes by sin."

Abba Poimen responded: "It seems that this woman has within her a spark of faith. Be assured that she will not remain a prostitute."

13. One day Abba Timothy's mother visited him. "Mother," Abba Timothy asked her, "does that woman still persist in living the life of a prostitute?"

"Yes," she replied, "and her lovers multiply; on the other hand, however"—she continued—"she multiplies her charitable works."

This news Abba Timothy conveyed to Abba Poimen.

And again Abba Poimen repeated:

"This woman will not remain for long in the sin of prostitution."

14. After a few years, Abba Timothy was once again visited by his mother. Among other things, she said the following: "You know, that prostitute asked to come with me, so that you could pray for her soul."

This information Abba Timothy again conveyed to Abba Poimen.

"Go"—Abba Poimen thus said—"and meet with her."

15. Indeed, Abba Timothy departed and met with the sinful woman. Upon hearing the word of God from the mouth of the ascetic, she was moved, wept, and proclaimed her contrition before Abba Timothy: "From this day forth, I repent and will cease being a prostitute, dedi-

cating myself to God."

Immediately fulfilling her words with deeds, she departed for a convent and pleased God with her repentance.

16. One of the Fathers related the following circumstance, which is worthy of note:

"Once," he said, "there lived in the city an officer of the palace court. One day he was sent by the king to someone as a messenger. On the road, he found a dead person, who was naked. The officer was saddened with this lamentable image of misfortune and said to his servant, 'Take my horse and go on a bit.'

"The officer dismounted and approached the dead man. Taking off some of his clothing, he covered the dead man with them.

17. "A few days after this incident, the officer was once again dispatched in the service of the king. But as soon as he left the city, he fell from his horse and broke his leg. He was immediately taken to his house, where he was beset by horrendous pain. The doctors looked after the ill man, but without result. After five days, his leg turned black. When the doctors saw this symptom, they became very concerned and, so that the rest of his body would not become infected, decided to amputate his leg.

18. "On hearing this decision of the doctors, the officer became very upset, wept over his misfortune, and, because of his sadness, could not even sleep. The night after he learned this terrible news, he remained completely sleepless.

"The lamps in his room thus being lighted, around midnight there came through the attic window an unknown man, who approached him. This man asked him, 'Why are you crying and why are you sad?'

"The officer answered him, 'Sir, how could I not cry? For no good reason I broke my leg, and tomorrow the doctors are going to amputate it.'

19. "This unknown man then said to the suffering officer: 'Show me your leg.'

"He began forthwith to anoint the leg of the sick man and to massage it. After a short time, he said to the ill man, 'Get up and walk.'

"'I cannot, Sir, because it is broken.'

"'Do not be afraid,' the man told him, 'lean on me.'

"In fact, the officer of the palace guard rose up from his bed and walked; he had become perfectly well.

"After this strange miracle, the unknown man said to the healed officer: 'See, you have become perfectly well. Lie down and rest from your nighttime vigil and your sufferings and do not worry.'

"Continuing, he spoke a few words about the value of charity, based on the words of Holy Scripture: 'Blessed are the meek [poor]: for they shall inherit the earth' (St. Matthew 5:5) and 'For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy' (St. James 2:13).

20. "Following this short dissertation, the unknown man bid farewell to the healed officer: 'Good-bye and be always healthy!'

"Saddened by the impending departure of his benefactor, the officer asked him: 'Are you leaving?'

"'What else do you want?' he said. 'You are now completely well.'

"The officer said back to him: 'In the name of God, who sent you? Tell me who you are.'

"'Look at me carefully'—the unknown man said—'and see if you recognize what I am wearing.'

"'Yes,' the officer said, 'those are my own clothes.'

"'Well, then,' said the unknown man, 'I am the same one whose body was tossed aside naked on the street and which you—with succor and mercy—covered with your clothes. It is thus that God sent me to cure you. For this, you should always thank Him.'

"Having finished his words, he climbed up again, through the attic window from which he had come, and became invisible. From that time forward, the healed man never ceased to thank God and to distribute alms to the poor."

21. A Christ-loving man said: "He who gives alms must offer them with such a joyful disposition that it would appear that he is the one receiving them. Only then does charity draw a man near to God."

22. A Christ-loving man was once on his way to work, when he encountered on the road a destitute person, who was without clothes. From his heart, this good man felt sorry for the destitute man and gave him his clothes. In short time, however, the poor man sold the clothes, and when the good man heard this, he was saddened.

So, what happened? That same night, Christ appeared in a dream to the charitable man, wearing the clothes which he had given as alms.

"Do not be sad," He said sweetly, "You see, I am wearing the clothes that you gave to Me."

**B. From St. Isaac**

1. St. Isaac said: "If you are offering charity and some equestrian on a beautiful horse comes to you and reaches out his hand to you to receive alms, do not ignore him. Happily offer aid to him. For it must be that he surely has need at the moment. Consider him a poor man and give him what he asks for. Take note of what a religious adage says: 'Cast your bread on the face of the waters, and long after you will receive your reward.' This adage is similar to the proverb: 'Do good and cast it on the shore' [from whence, like bread on the waters, it will return—*Trans.*]"

2. When you practice charity, in your offerings never separate the rich man from the poor man and do not inquire precisely about who is worthy to receive charity and who is not; with regard to good works, consider everyone equal. Call to mind the Lord, Who, in order to benefit them without discrimination, associated with tax collectors and prostitutes, sitting at the same table with them, without separating the worthy from the unworthy, in respect to His offering of love. In this way, He brought them near to Him. With such external behavior, that is, by His bodily presence He raised them to the higher spiritual realm which they sought.

**C. From St. Maximos**

He who wishes to imitate God in giving alms must not, in his good works, distinguish the good from the evil or the righteous from the unrighteous, as concerns the meeting of their bodily needs; to all those of such disposition give what is necessary, even if one may, in his soul, prefer the virtuous over the evil.

* Corporeal charity consists of giving to the needy, poor, and infirm the kinds of things which they lack; among such things one can also consider the gift to them of money. This kind of charity is called *corporeal*, in order to distinguish it from what is called *spiritual* charity, which consists of counsel for the strengthening in faith of those tested by illness and weakness of soul.

** *Ennaton* (more properly, "*Enaton*") was a monastery in Egypt, which was located nine milestones from Alexandria. (See the endnotes for Hypothesis XXXV, "Milestones," Book III. The Enaton Monastery was founded in the fifth century—*Editors.*)

*** Aïla [Latin: Aila—*Trans.*] was a city in Arabia Petræa on the Gulf of Aelana (Aqaba). Strabo [the ancient geographer and historian—*Trans.*] called the city "Aelana," while the Arabs called it "Aila" or "Aïlex." (Today, it [i.e., the region in which the city was located—*Trans.*] is called "Hedjaz" [or Hejaz—*Trans.*].)

**** "Tares" are what we call any parasitic plant which spreads in fields where wheat is planted and ripens along with the wheat. If wheat is not cleansed of these tares, but they are mixed with it, then the resulting flour (and the bread that is afterwards made with this flour) cannot be used for food, since it becomes bitter. It is also dangerous, because it produces nausea and vomiting in those who eat it, the intensity of these symptoms corresponding to the extent to which the parasitic grains are mixed with the wheat. The most common tares are generally invasive darnel. By reason of the characteristics of tares, metaphorically we call "tares" such things as uneasiness, that which causes upset, and everything that is incited on account of wrangling or contentions. The spreading of tares among wheat is cited by the Lord in one of His parables (St. Matthew 13:24-30). Therein the Lord calls Himself the good seed of the wheat, the Devil the bad seed of the tares, good wheat the righteous, and tares the evil.

***** "The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God" (Exodus 23:19, Leviticus 23:10, and elsewhere).

• "[T]he firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto Me" (Exodus 22:29).

•• What is referred to as the ninth hour in the original text corresponds to what we call nine in the morning.

## Hypothesis III

*The passion of greed is the most destructive of all the other passions.*

### A. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

1. The passion of greed is very fearful and destructive, since it is completely impossible for one who loves pleasures and money to live according to the commandments of God. Now, this passion, when it finds a soul without the warm zeal of virtue and without faith, begins to beset it with various "good" and plausible pretexts, in order to justify in it a proclivity towards money; among such pretexts, for example, are old age, bodily illness, and the like. And just as the sea is never filled, despite the many rivers that feed it, in the same way the desires of a greedy person are never satisfied by the money which he endlessly seeks.

2. A greedy monk, in order to acquire money, works hard, while the poor monk dedicates himself to prayer and beneficial reading. A greedy monk, in order to store up what he needs to survive, transforms his purse into his treasure, while the poor monk treasures only virtues. The Holy Scriptures say, "Cursed is the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place" (Deuteronomy 27:15). In this way, such a man resembles the greedy; for the idolater worships a false god, who benefits him nothing, while the greedy man, in his thoughts, makes of the material centrality of wealth an idol to be worshipped as a god. In the same way, precisely, that the glutton's stomach becomes his god, so it is that money becomes the god of the greedy.

3. From this passion of greed, as we have shown, suffer all those who lack faith and hope. These one can quite logically call idolaters, since they no longer place their hopes in God, but in the images of kings.* Thus it is, then, as the Scripture also says, that there is no greater outlaw than a greedy man; for the greedy man even puts his soul up for sale on account of money. Many such men, in fact, die spiritually for the sake of money. A timeless example is Judas, who for reason of greed,

not only fell from the ranks of the Apostles, but became a betrayer of the Master and, in the end, lost both his soul and his life, committing suicide by hanging himself out of grief and desperation.

4. So, greed is leprosy of the soul. This is shown by Giezi [Gehazi—*Trans.*], who, the moment that he fell to the love of money, was infected by leprosy. Greed is also a worm that eats at the bones of a man by way of the thought of money, rendering him sleepless, as he thinks about how to hide his money.

He who so wishes, however, may easily overcome greed, since it is not a passion that arises from the nature of man, but from his intention. For this very reason, he who strengthens his faith in God and who places his hope in Him alone, without wavering, can easily conquer the passion of greed and save himself from great danger.

5. Blessed is that man who, according to Holy Scripture, is cleansed of the miasma of greed and who does not wish to pursue money.** The Apostle James warns lovers of money, saying: "Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire" (St. James 5:3).

6. Approximately the same is said by the Prophet Ambakoum [Habakkuk, Abbak(c)um, Avvak(c)um, etc.—*Trans.*]: "Woe to him who multiplies to himself the possessions that are not his" (Ambakoum 2:6); for indeed, he who gathers money has his treasure in things that, after he dies, will not be his any longer. In agreement with the two foregoing men from Holy Scripture—the Apostle James and the Prophet Ambakoum—the Prophet-King David says: "Lo, this is the man that made not God his helper, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his vanity" (Psalm 51:9).

7. Let us flee, then, my brothers, this fearful passion, which makes a man not to feel empathy, which inspires in him hatred towards others, destroys all hope in God, and is the cause of all evils. Let us heed the Apostle, who says: "For the love of money is the root of all evil" (I St. Timothy 6:10). Let us keep close to our bosom a love of poverty, obeying our Savior, Who commands us: "Provide neither gold, not silver, nor brass in your purses" (St. Matthew 10:9). Poverty, since it entails freedom from the material and from concern for money, makes the practitioner of penury eager in spiritual struggle and light of heart, lifting

him into the heavens.

8. For precisely this reason, let us entrust to God all that is necessary for our bodies, indicating thereby that we entrust to Him all of our spiritual needs, as well; for He cares for and remembers us and knows of what things we have need, even before we ask them of Him.

9. God, Who is simple in Essence, particularly loves simplicity and those who live simply. He thus enriches with His riches the simple and those who live simply. About this subject, the Proverbs of Solomon, in Holy Scripture, contain sufficient and significant examples. Let us look at some of these: "He that walks simply, walks confidently" (Proverbs 10:9). "The faithful man has the whole world full of wealth; but the faithless not even a farthing" (Proverbs 17:6). "The blessing of the Lord is upon the head of the just" (Proverbs 10:6). "Every simple soul is blessed" (Proverbs 11:25). "[B]ut he that soweth righteousness shall receive a faithful reward" (Proverbs 11:21). "The Lord will not famish a righteous soul" (Proverbs 10:3). "He that trusteth in wealth shall fall" (Proverbs 11:28).

10. Aside from these didactic words of the wise Solomon, of great instruction are those which we find in the Psalms: "Behold, the eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy. To deliver their souls from death, and to nourish them in famine" (Psalm 32:18-19). "The rich are become poor and have suffered hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good thing" (Psalm 33:11). Again, in this regard, in another place in the Book of Psalms, it is written: "I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalm 36:25).

11. And our Man-Befriending Master Himself counsels us with the following characteristic verses: "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are you not much better than they?" (St. Matthew 6:26). And immediately, He tells us what we must do: "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all, these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all of these things shall be added unto you" (St. Matthew 6:31-33).

**B. From St. Maximos**

Every greedy man pretends to be virtuous, presenting himself as supposedly pious in the eyes of the world. But as soon as he secures the money which is the goal of his desires, he then immediately disavows the way of life that he heretofore (supposedly) followed and by virtue of which he was reckoned a disciple of the Word.

**C. From the *Gerontikon***

"What sort of thing is greed?" an ascetic Elder was once asked. He then gave the following answer:

"Greed is to lack trust that God looks after you, no longer to hope in His promises, and to love pleasure."

* St. Antiochos calls coins "images of kings" (*ζῴδια βασιλικά*) by synecdoche, because they bore engraved images of kings. The word "*ζῴδιον*" means also image, shape, and depiction.

** "Blessed is the man that is found without blemish, and hath not gone after gold" (Ecclesiasticus 34:8).

## Hypothesis IV

*From whence comes forth the love of God, how it is expressed, and what its works are.*

### A. From St. Mark

1. Those who love God are dying each day; that is, they attempt to rise above the boundaries of this present life. Such people think of nothing except how they might arrive at perfect and complete love for Christ, which is a profound opening in the heart through which, by way of holy baptism, Jesus enters in, to the end of preparing it for this lofty and Divine love.

2. The Apostle Paul said of our seeking this, as opposed to what is bound within the physical life: "[B]ut I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:12); that is, I seek to love Jesus as much as He loved me. This condition of absolute love beyond all measure for Jesus he considered the supreme fulfillment of the desires of his heart; and thus, aside from the enjoyment of this love, there was no longer anything about which he desired to think or to seek. Neither the afflictions of the body nor the wonders of creation could separate him from this lofty love. He happily forsook all other things, as long as he was not deprived even for one hour of the most sweet delight which the energy of the spirit kindles in the heart in the form of the presence of love.

3. How many things he was able to ignore, on account of this spiritual love, he tells us himself: "What shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35). And he concludes with the magnificent assurance: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). He said all of this because he did not want his mind to be captured by anything; he wished at all times to think upon the

love of Christ and to fill his heart with it.

4. Every word which Christ said makes manifest the mercy, the righteousness, and the wisdom of God; and any who *eagerly and gladly hear* these words take into their hearts the power which is therein hidden. For this reason, the unmerciful and the unrighteous, since they *hear these words of Christ with displeasure,* are unable to understand the wisdom of God. Not only this, but when He was teaching on earth, they crucified Him.

5. Let us also see, then, if we are hearing the words of the Lord with pleasure, for He has said: "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him" (St. John 14:21). Do you see how His manifestation in our souls is hidden within the commandments, such that he who is worthy of such vision is only he who keeps those commandments?

6. He who wishes to make advancement and progress according to God must begin here: by keeping this principle in mind and remembering it continually. It is appointed that we begin from these thoughts in our Godly advancement: Christian, you must continually reflect and think about the manifestations of God's concern for you and His benefactions from your birth to the present day, both those which He has shown to your body, as well as those which He has shown your spirit. Have these constantly before your eyes. Take care that you reflect on these things in your mind, that you might continually speak of them, in keeping with the word of Holy Scripture: "And forget not all His benefits" (Psalm 102:2). Be careful lest you are overcome by forgetfulness, or are conquered by laziness, and thus forget the many and great benefactions of God, in which case you will pass the remainder of your life as someone ungrateful and useless.

7. For this continuous remembrance of the benefactions of God is like a dagger that pricks the heart and moves it always to confess the munificences of God, to be humbled, to thank God with a contrite soul, to do good, to conduct oneself with good manners and Christian ideals, to put into practice all of the Godly virtues, and to reflect always, with profound awareness, on the word of the Prophet: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all that He hath rendered unto me?" (Psalm 115:3).

8. For when the soul dwells on the benefactions of God, Who loves a man from his birth; when it reflects on how often it has been saved from dangers, or how many times it fell to various evils; and how, though succumbing to many errors by its own will, it was not delivered, as would be just, to the evil spirits that lured it into destruction, that it might die spiritually—it then sees that the Master, Who loves man, looks beyond his sins and protects him, awaiting his return.

9. When, again, the soul reflects on the fact that, when it was willfully enslaved through the passions by evil spirits, the Lord kept it, covered it by His love, and in all ways looked after it; when, finally, it realizes that God, as a sign of His Goodness, led it to the path of salvation, placing in it a love of the ascetic life, encouraged it, such that it might with joy abandon the world (the falsehood of the fleshly desires), and adorned it with the Angelic habit of the ascetic life, it sees how, in the end, it happened that it so easily came to dwell among the Holy Fathers in the brotherhood.

10. When one thinks about all of these things with great knowledge and conscientiously, how can he not feel, at all times, contrition of heart and emotion, in as much as he has such proofs from the aforementioned benefactions from God? How can he not place his sure hope in the love of God, Who has shown such loving care for him, when he himself has heretofore accomplished no good, but indeed has in many ways sinned before God? This you should reflect upon, my blessed brother: If God, Who "hath not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (Psalm 102:10), but rather, in order to save me, enriched me with so many and such abundant gifts and Grace—even when I succeeded at no good thing at all, but, to the contrary, committed many sins before Him by arresting my conscience through the pollution of my flesh and other evil deeds—then how many spiritual goods and how many gifts will He not *now* give me, since I have dedicated myself wholly to Him, in order to work for a pure life and the realization of the virtues, thus leading me and strengthening me in success at every work of goodness?

11. For this reason precisely, he who continually preserves this salvific thought, and never forgets the many benefactions of God, will with great ease dispose his heart towards works of virtue and love of God, to the end that he might, to whatever extent possible, repay these

benefactions with a virtuous life and the constant exercise of good things, working always with diligence towards righteousness and ready at any moment to fulfill the Will of God. The remembrance of all of these benefactions, which have been bestowed on him by the Master in His love for man, will stir him and prod him continually to do the difficult work of virtue. Therefore, instinctively, or rather with the help of Divine Grace, his heart will daily be wholly attracted and drawn aside by the desire for God and His love.

**B. From St. Diadochos**

1. One cannot love God and his heart be warmed by the sensation of His love, if he does not first feel within his heart the fear of God. For the power of the fear of God soothes and softens the soul, so that it can attain to a state of forceful and vibrant love of Him. However, it is not possible for one ever to succeed at kindling this love and contrite fear, unless he has first removed himself far from all memory of the things of this life.

2. For when the spiritual mind is wholly at peace from the din of memories and is not disturbed by them, only then does it feel a Divine and beneficial stirring by the fear of God; and thereupon, this beneficial fear, through a strong feeling of the presence of God, cleanses a person of the weight of materialism and earthy heaviness, leading him to immeasurable love of the kindness of God. It is thereby that we are taught by these things, on the one hand, that the fear of God is observed in those individuals who are found in a stage of purification in which they feel a modicum of love toward God; or, on the other hand, that wholly beyond every measure of love towards God are found those individuals who have been purified in soul of every earthly weakness and who, on this account, cease being directed towards the spiritual life by the fear of God. Because, as it is well known, the attainment of total love towards God drives from the soul all fear.*

3. And these two states, that is, fear of God and total love for Him, are found only in the souls of the righteous, who, through the energy of the Holy Spirit, bring the virtues to fruition in their lives. At one point Holy Scripture alludes to this truth, where it is said, "O fear the Lord, all ye His Saints" (Psalm 33:10) and "O love the Lord, all ye his Saints" (Psalm 30:24). By these two verses, we are informed in detail that the

fear of God, combined with a modicum of love, exists, as we have shown, in the souls of those righteous ones who have been purified of their past memories and their preoccupation with worldly things; whereas complete and total love fills the souls of those purified righteous ones in whom we find not the slightest notion of fear, but only the unceasing glow of a desire for God, by the energizing of the Holy Spirit, in keeping with the Divine sage: "My soul hath cleaved unto Thee: Thy right hand hath upholden me" (Psalm 62:9).

4. Precisely those things which are observed in our bodies also happen to our souls: as long as wounds to the body go without therapeutic attention and become scabbed over, they do not respond to the effects of the medicine which a doctor places on them; however, when they are washed and cleansed, they feel the effects of medical treatment and thus proceed to quick healing. It is thus with the soul. When it goes without spiritual attention and is wholly covered by the leprosy of voluptuousness, it is never possible for it to feel the fear of God, even if someone should continually remind it how fearful the righteous wrath of God is, as well as His omnipotence.

5. However, from the moment the soul, with great attention, begins to be cleansed from voluptuousness and the passions, it then feels once again, in the flame of passionlessness which is ignited thereby, the fear of God, which, like a life-giving medicine, scorches it by the reproofs of the conscience.** The cleansing of the soul from sins, ideas, and thoughts thus proceeds to perfect and total purification, such that nothing worldly or material exists, and thereupon the fear of God gives way to the love of God. Therein, one is brought to perfect love, in which there is no fear and in which there is an assurance of release from all of the passions; and this passionlessness gives rise to the soul to glorify God.

Let us, then, consider the fear of God to be the first object of our continual boasting, above all other objects of pride, and the second object, love, which is the very fulfillment of the law*** of holy perfection in Christ.****

6. One who has self-love cannot love God, while he who is not a lover of self, since his heart is flooded by the immeasurable richness of the love of God, truly loves God. For this reason precisely, such a one does not love the glory of self, nor does he seek it; rather, he seeks only the glory of God. A lover of the self seeks his own glory, while a lover

of God seeks the glory of his Creator.

7. A characteristic sign of the soul that feels the majesty of God, and loves God, is to seek always the glory of God, to apply all of the commandments of God, and to find joy in humility and its own self-deprecation, since to God is due honor and majesty, while humility is appropriate to man, that we might, through it, become friends of God. If, indeed, we do this, then we too, like St. John the Baptist, will find joy through the glory of Christ and shall say continuously, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (St. John 3:30).

8. I know a man who loves God so much that he continually mourns, since, as he says, he does not love God as he should, to the point that his heart is constantly burning with a strong desire for God. This man, by his natural disposition of soul and general behavior, glorifies God, while his own self he does not even think about as existing. And he does not even know this himself, though it is true, since to words of praise regarding his lofty spiritual state he gives no attention. For, on account of his intense desire for humility, he does not even think of his own worth.

9. This happens because, on the one hand, he functions in God, as appointed by the liturgical law of the Church, while, on the other hand, he takes his sense of self-worth from the world of the soul; and pride, which is spawned in every man, he covers with humility in the depths of his love for God. In this way, he thinks of himself as a wretched slave, wholly a stranger to his actual worth. By this self-deprecation, he is guided by the desire for humility. We, of course, must also imitate this example and flee from all glory and the honors of men, wholly filling our hearts with the immeasurable richness of the love of the Lord, Who truly loves us.

10. He who loves God with all the warmth of his heart***** is known to God as His own; for the more that a man is possessed by God and is filled with the love of God, that is, to the extent that he feels ever more strongly that he loves God, all the more is such a man taken up by the love of God. And so it is that this man, flooded by the light of Divine knowledge, is possessed by the most forceful Divine eros, to the point that even his bones feel the sacred shudderings of this love, while he, himself, is not any longer aware of his former self—for he is found wholly altered, changed by the action of God's love.

11. This man, whom Divine eros has transformed, even if he is in the present life, is removed from it; for though his soul still remains in the body, nonetheless the same, by the movement of the soul, which is roused by love, continually takes flight towards God, far from things bodily and material and of a common kind.

Moreover, the love of God sets aflame the heart of such a man, creating a strong and invincible desire, by reason of which he becomes so attached to God that he denies himself on account of this love of God. For, as the spirit of God says: "For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of God constraineth us" (II Corinthians 5:13-14).•

12. When one begins to sense the love of God and his soul is filled with it, then he begins to love his neighbor in a spiritual way; for only this is the true love to which all of the Holy Scriptures refer; for the other kind of love (friendship), which binds men together only externally, is easily dissolved, and usually for insignificant reasons. This occurs because the ties of external love are not spiritual, but material, worldly, and thus fragile.

13. On the contrary, spiritual love is not fragile, for even if it happens that the soul is troubled by someone, when God so deigns, this does not remove from it the ties of love. The soul which loves God is warmed continually by the love of God and, for this reason, even when one with such a soul has been exceedingly insulted and damaged by his neighbor, he quickly and in short time turns to the realm of goodness and with great joy resumes his love for his neighbor. In the realm of the sweet love of God, one loses wholly the bitterness of enmity and disputation.

14. Just as those things of this world, which appear to us good and beautiful, lure us by the wiles of our senses, in the same way the soul is directed to the heavenly and unseen virtues, guided by the inward gaze of the mind,•• as a man tastes of Divine goodness. For each of these two aspects in man desires with keenness that which is related and similar to its constitution. That is, on the one hand, as a bodiless thing, the one desires heavenly goods, while the body has need of earthly nourishment. If, therefore, we succeed by ascetic labors and through virtue in limiting the sphere of the material, then we shall surely taste of the delights and pleasures of the lofty and spiritual sensation of God.

15. Divine knowledge, which is placed by God in the conscience of man, teaches us that the soul is disposed towards one innate sense; this sense, because of the fall of Adam, is divided into two energies. The one sensory energy is created in him through the power of the Holy Spirit and is distinguished by the simplicity of its character.••• This sensate energy cannot be known, save by those who gladly turn from the fleeting good things of this world and with self-constraint cut off the disposition of the bodily senses towards worldly pleasure for the sake of the future good things of Paradise.

16. For only to those who have been freed from the temptations of the memories of this life is it possible to move their spiritual minds with vigor to the heights of the spirit and, thereby, feel the succor of Divine goodness, which those who taste of it cannot express in words.

Then, indeed, the spiritual mind, which feels the succor of Divine goodness, conveys to the body this inutterable joy for its enjoyment of such a blessing—in keeping, of course, with the measure of one's progress. Such a person experiences an inexpressible jubilation, and being unable to explain with his logical faculties this state of his, he desires to proclaim the majesty of God continually, as the Holy Scripture says: "My heart hoped in Him, and I am helped; and my flesh has flourished anew, and willingly shall I praise Him" (Psalm 27:7). True joy, which is then ignited in the heart and body of a person, bears witness in the soul—and this with certainty—to the majesty of eternal and everlasting life.

17. He who loves God and truly believes on Him will assuredly fulfill those deeds which true and genuine faith entails. For him, however, who only believes, without having the fullness of love, even that faith which he believes he has, he does not in fact have, because he believes superficially. For this faith does not make manifest the glorious depth of love, which is transformed by one into good deeds. Faith which is maintained energetic and vivid through love—this alone is the greatest of all virtues.

18. No one can believe in God, or love Him sincerely, as long as his external self is troubled by the reproofs of his conscience, in which case the conscience does not let the soul enjoy the fragrance of other-worldly good things, but immediately overcomes it with doubts. The provenance of these doubts is the following: the soul, by virtue of acquiring

experience from faith, is warmed by the fervent desire of ethereal good things, towards which it moves. Despite this, however, because of the reproofs of the conscience, as we have said, it cannot, through love, transform this desire into a sensation of the heart.•••• On this account, let us try to cleanse our soul, with greater care, of the various reasons for the reproof of conscience. The soul thus brightened, its experience with the delights of the spirit is enlarged, whereupon, by the help of God, it will achieve that which it desires.

19. Divine Grace, through Holy Baptism and its regeneration, conveys to us two good things; of these, one is much greater than the other. The one good thing is granted directly at Holy Baptism: it, through the waters of rebirth, restores us, removing from us every trace of sin, and our soul, in all of its movements and energies, comes back thereby to its original state, that of "the image [of God—*Trans.*]," bright and shining. The other good thing that Divine Grace brings to a man rests in his intention, in his work, and in continual efforts to fulfill his Baptism; and this means to acquire "the likeness [of God—*Trans.*]."

20. Thus, when our minds, with great gratitude, begin to taste of the beneficent energies of the Holy Spirit, we come to know that Divine Grace has begun more fully to paint the "likeness [of God—*Trans.*]" on the "image [of God]" within us. In this process, the work of Divine Grace resembles that of artists. Artists, when they paint a human being, in the beginning draw the figure with one color only, afterwards embellishing their canvas, little by little, with different colors, thus giving form to what they are painting in every detail, even down to the hairs of the head. Similarly, Divine Grace, too, first through Holy Baptism, returns man to his precious blessedness, which is found in his creation according to "the image [of God—*Trans.*]."

21. When Divine Grace sees, by the various proclivities of our soul, that we desire to acquire the likeness of God and that we have set out with austerity and without fear in this persistent effort, then it adorns us with virtues and exalts our soul from glory to glory, until it clearly imprints upon us this likeness, thereby establishing a man in the likeness of God.

Consequently, then, the awareness of goodness and of spiritual beauty makes known to us the beginnings of the formation of the "likeness [of God—*Trans.*]" within us; but the final triumph of this state, that

of acquiring the "likeness [of God—*Trans.*]," will be made known to us only through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, which will illuminate our soul.

22. It is thus that such things happen: The spiritual mind of man regains all of the virtues through the natural awareness of the soul, advancing to spiritual perfection to an ineffable measure and with an ineffable pace—though spiritual love it cannot otherwise attain by its own efforts, unless it is enlightened by the Holy Spirit and informed by Grace. To the extent that a man harmonizes his will with the lofty virtues of God, coming to resemble God—as much as this is possible to man—he can be like unto God in Divine love.

23. Once again, being aided by the example of the artist, we can understand better the meaning of the likeness of the soul to Divine love. Just as in the art of portrait painting, when more vivid and detailed colors are applied to the image, such similarity between the painting and the prototype is assured, that even the smallest detail is captured—the smile, for example—so in the same way, all of the virtues and signs of likeness unto God are repainted on the soul by Divine Grace. When there is applied by Divine Grace the full and final state of that similarity (the illumination of love), it then becomes clear that the soul has successfully completed its full evolution from the "image [of God—*Trans.*]" to the "likeness [unto God—*Trans.*]." Passivity, which is the seal of the likeness of man unto God, assigns no other virtue to the soul, save love alone; for the fullness of the law is fulfilled only by love.•••••

24. Accordingly, then, as our inner man regains new powers and is continually renewed from one day to another by tasting of love, it comes to perfection only in the fullness of love.

25. The Holy Spirit, at the onset of our struggle for spiritual progress, as long as we are working for the attainment of virtues in God, offers to the soul, on the one hand, a foretaste of love by way of spiritual feelings and the revelation of Divine Grace, but nonetheless, on the other hand, hides from a person, for a great period of time, the exceeding richness of the heavenly beauty of this life-giving gift. This energy of the Holy Spirit is aimed at forming a person's mind, in order that he might understand absolutely perfectly the inestimable prize that awaits him for his labor in love in God, and, as well, that he should not think him-

self perchance to be something, even if he has achieved every virtue, since he has not yet made blessed love habitual.

26. Now, it is then that the demon of hatred can beset those who are struggling, such that they come to hate even those who love them. And this destructive power of hatred, by the energy of the Evil One, even goes so far as to affect salutations, such that individuals will not even greet one another.

For this reason, the soul suffers greatly and is pained, since, while it yearns for spiritual love, it cannot consciously achieve it, since it is still remiss and lacking in sedulous works and struggles.

27. Therefore, it is necessary to pressure ourselves, so that we can reach the point that we can taste of the heavenly delight of love through all of our spiritual senses, as well as by the inner revelation of Divine Grace. For no one can achieve perfect Grace as long as he is clothed in the perishable flesh. Only the Saints are exempted from this, as those who have, to the point of martyrdom, come continually, day and night, to worship God, having totally transformed their personal disposition and their state of soul to such a degree that even material nourishment they do not easily desire.

28. And this is perfectly natural, since how is it possible that he who is continually nourished by Divine love should desire the corrupt good of this vain and temporary world? It is for this reason that the most wise Paul, that great repository of lofty and Divine knowledge, declares to us the joyous message of the future things which the Righteous will enjoy (which he knew from his own personal revelation from within), saying to us: "[F]or the Kingdom of God is not food and drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17), which are the fruits of perfect love.

29. We may conclude, therefore, that it is possible for man to taste always of Divine love in this present world, though it is not possible to attain to its perfection and fullness unless the mortal life has been wholly immersed in the spiritual and immortal life.

30. One from among those who love God, and whose souls are incapable of being satiated by this love, related to me the following with regard to the feelings of which he tasted:

"I desired," he told me, "intensely to come to know the love of God. And my singly good God granted me this gift, so that I might feel the flame of this love, but also that I might affirm it by the internal revelation of Grace. So strongly did I feel this energy of God, that I felt my soul to leap from unspeakable joy and love and to come out by force from my body, that it might ascend to the Lord. Under the dominion, then, of these moving experiences, I had no interest in any of those things that sustain the present life, which seemed to be unknown to me." These are the things which this blessed man confided to me.

31. He who attains to such an experience of love, and who feels as did this holy man, does not show anger to his neighbor, even if he is unbearably insulted by him or very much injured; his soul remains wholly passionless and unconcerned, as though he were one with the one who insults him and causes him harm.

His soul, flooded by love, is moved by passionless exasperation only with those who oppress the poor or who speak ill of the righteousness of God,† or, finally, with those who live in sin.

32. He, then, who loves God more than he loves himself, or rather who loves only God without loving himself, ceases to seek after his own honor, but seeks the honor of Him who honored him by Holy Baptism and eternal life. Such a person considers virtue and righteousness an honor from Him Whom he honors, and he wishes to honor Him by his spiritual disposition and works.

To look after and seek the honor of Him Whom he honors, and not himself, is not the result of just a small act of will, but a disposition of soul, owing to a firm habit that has its root in the rich experience of God's love.

33. Moreover, we should also know this: He in whom God gives rise to such a warm love reaches a level which is beyond even faith, during this period of Divine action, for the heart of the lover of God is filled with a superior and lofty sense of God and thus, through great love, is held firmly and, in a certain way, captivated by the One Whom, through faith, the lover of God honors. This is intimated by the Apostle Paul, when he says: "And now abideth faith, hope, and love: these three; but the greatest of these is love" (I Corinthians 13:13).

Accordingly, as I have said, he who, with the richness of his love, at last comes to know God as a reality of the heart—such a one has ex-

ceeded faith, since he actively feels the presence of God.††

**C. From St. Maximos**

1. Love is the disposition of a virtuous soul, which motivates one to prefer the love of God over all that is, whether material or spiritual. However, it is impossible for a man to make this love habitual, as long as he is tied to the things of the world.

2. He Who loves God is indifferent to all that which God has created and desires only to know Him; that is, he seeks inner enlightenment, which has as its source this knowledge and which is the life of our spiritual mind. Such a man strongly desires, above all, the knowledge of God and is constantly grounded therein.

3. And he who, through love, has attached his mind to God is also, on this account, indifferent to his body, dismissing it as something foreign.

4. Since the soul is superior in worth to the body, the Creator of the world is assuredly also incomparably greater than the world. Therefore, one who prefers the body to the soul and the creations of the world to the Creator is most certainly in no way different from an idolater.

5. He who distances his mind from the love of God, and from continual spiritual communion with God, and gives himself over to material and worldly things—such is one who prefers the body over the soul and created things over the Creator.

6. He who actually believes in the Lord fears Hell; and he who fears Hell controls himself and does not fall to the passions. And again, he who maintains control in the face of the passions endures afflictions; enduring afflictions, he places his hope in God. Hope in God preserves man from every anxious concern and earthly occupation. And since his mind has been released from every concern and care of the world, all the more does he attain to the love of God.

7. All of the virtues strengthen the spiritual mind's loving desire for God and help it to enjoy such; however, it is most strengthened in the purity wrought by mental prayer. With the aid of noetic prayer, the spir-

itual mind turns to God, whereupon it feels nothing either of itself or of other existent things. From the moment that the mind is illumined by Divine and infinite light, it loses any sense of material events or things, just as the eyes of the body lose sight of the stars, as the sun rises.

8. When, with the help of love, the mind is caught up by Divine knowledge and finds itself outside the realm of material existence, then it clearly perceives the boundlessness of the Divine and comes to sense its own nothingness and lowliness. With contrition and compunction, it recalls the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5).

9. Just as the mere thought of fire does not heat the body, but only fire itself draws the body to it and heats it, thus the knowledge of God alone is of no benefit without its working in synergy with love for God. The knowledge††† of God naturally draws to itself a pure mind by means of love. And the mind is pure as long as it has removed itself from ignorance of the majesty and love of God and has been illuminated by Divine light.

10. He who loves God cannot but love all men as he would love himself, even if he does feel sorrow at the passions of those who are not yet pure. For this reason precisely, he feels boundless and inexpressible joy when he sees their repentance and correction.

11. He who maintains in his soul even the slightest mark of hatred for any person whatsoever, on the grounds of some sort of offense, is wholly foreign to the love of God. For the love of God in no way whatever countenances hatred towards our fellow man. Our Lord Himself said: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (St. John 14:15), and "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (St. John 15:12). Therefore, anyone who does not love his neighbor has not put into action the commandment of God; and he, once again, who does not put into action this commandment of God cannot even love God Himself.

12. God, since He is by nature good and without passion, loves all men equally, as His creatures; but the virtuous man He glorifies, for the

man virtuous in intention and thought makes himself a friend of God and seeks to conform to His commandments and His Will.

13. He who loves God lives upon the earth as though he were an Angel; that is, he fasts, performs vigils, chants and prays, and constantly thinks good of all people.

14. To submit the flesh to severe fasting and, with vigils, to devote yourself to psalmody and prayer without fail: when you undertake such things, you will then be made worthy to enjoy sanctification—by way of the prudence that will be visited upon you, bringing love to your soul.

15. When you have proved worthy of Divine knowledge and have achieved, by love, illumination therefrom, the demon of vanity will no longer be able, by its abominable gusts, to throw you to and fro. Whereas, to the contrary, he who has not yet been deemed worthy of the illumination of Divine knowledge is easily taken away by vanity to various arrogant thoughts and thinks highly of whatever he may undertake as expressing the Will of God. He who has achieved Divine knowledge brings to mind, with inner gratitude and satisfaction, the words of the Patriarch Abraham, who uttered these words at the very moment that he was made worthy of seeing God: "I am but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27).

16. One who adjusts the conditions of his soul to match the attitudes of men towards him has not attained to perfect love: the one person he loves, the other he hates; or he sometimes loves or sometimes hates the same person, in keeping with the attitude of his comrades towards that person.

17. One who truly loves God neither saddens others nor feels sadness when bothered by other people on account of temporary problems. By one salutary regret is he saddened or worried: by that which caused grief to the blessed Apostle Paul and by virtue of which St. Paul saddened the Corinthians [by his chastisement—*Trans.*].††††

18. In the man whose spiritual mind is found unceasingly seeking after God, there is not only magnified this seeking after God by the boundlessness of Divine love for God, but that violent movement of the

soul, anger, is transformed wholly into the love of God. For continual and persistent participation in the ecstasy of Divine illumination renders such a man light-filled and radiant, and so confined is the passionate part of his soul to the inner world, that he is transformed, as one discovers, in Divine eros and love, which never cease. Thus, the world of his soul is wholly transferred from the earthly to the Divine and Heavenly.

19. When the spiritual mind is united with God and passes all of its time with Him in prayer and love, it becomes wise and virtuous, strong and loving of men, merciful and long-suffering, and, in short, attains to all of the Divine qualities. When, however, it separates from God and begins to be occupied with material and ephemeral things, it then lowers itself to what is brutish, by way of worldly pleasure, or becomes like a beast, clashing with people.

20. When you see that your mind is happily occupied with material things and dwells on material thoughts and the love of worldly things, then you should reflect on the fact that your mind loves material things more than God. For the Lord has said: "For where your treasure is, there will be your heart also" (St. Matthew 6:21).

21. The love of God persuades a man who feels this love in his heart to ignore fleeting pleasures, labors, and sorrow. In this, we should be convinced by the example of all of the Saints, who happily set aside such things for Christ.

22. The fear of eternal damnation causes those who taste thereof to flee evil; however, the desire for the restoration of what is good in those who progress spiritually yields diligence in the attainment of virtues.

23. The mystery of love elevates the mind above all events, yet draws a man's attention to the Divine, such that one is rendered blind to all other things that exist, save for God. And then God finally reveals the most lofty and delicate truths about Himself to such a man, for He enrichens with the treasures of His wisdom only those who view nothing after God and aside from Him.†††††

**D. From Abba Isaac**

1. The love which a person feels towards God is, by nature, warm, and when it comes richly to dwell in one's heart, it throws one into Divine ecstasy and into other-worldly thoughts and reflection; in proportion to the intensity of the love that falls upon him, there is observed in such a man an unusual change and transformation.‡

2. This internal change is perceptible from certain external signs. Thus the person's face becomes bright with light, as though he were next to a glittering flame, and he is adorned with joy; his body is made warm. From a man who has been overcome by, and has felt, this overwhelming love for God, there departs any fear or shame, for since he loves God, he neither fears Him nor shrinks before Him; so it is that from such a man there vanishes the possibility of diverting his mind to other thoughts, as he has been wholly immersed in God.

3. A man thereafter completely goes beyond the boundaries and the extant things of existence in the experience of wondrous ecstasy, no longer enduring the control of logic, but thinking and acting foolishly.‡‡ Thus he considers fearful death a joy and his mind does not stop pondering, ceaselessly, heavenly things and reckoning them present. His mind is always preoccupied, as though he were speaking with someone, in such a manner that he does not feel the natural physiological movements of his body, since his spiritual mind is found in high places, concerned with the metaphysical contemplation of Divine thoughts.

4. This Divine ecstasy, this spiritual inebriation, was experienced by the Apostles and Martyrs. The Apostles, on the one hand, traversed the entire world, submitting to arduous labors and withstanding, without complaint, humiliation by unbelievers, while the Martyrs, on the other hand, warred upon and suffering fearful torments, did not lose courage, but withstood these trials with magnanimity. And though they were actually wise, the unbelievers thought of them as foolish. May God deign us worthy to succumb to that which is thought by the world of sin to be foolishness.

5. Fear (of God) leads us to love, and by means of works of foolishness in Christ, we enter into spiritual paradise and draw near to the Tree of Life, which is love. Adam fell away from this love, and no longer was he able to taste of joy in his heart, but only to work and labor arduously in the world of thorns, feeding, by way of his hard work and painful

labors, upon bread wet with tears.

6. And we, until we arrive at love, work in a world strewn with thorns, and in that realm we sow and reap, every moment pricked by these thorns. Were the seeds that we sow seeds of righteousness, then, by the sweat of our brows, we would be supplied with the bread of the virtues.

7. When we achieve and find love, which is the nourishment of the Angels, then we, too, will be nourished by heavenly bread and, without labor or effort of any kind, will be strengthened by the power of this heavenly bread. He, then, who finds love feeds upon Christ, experiencing immortality in being nourished by Him.

8. This truth rests on the affirmation of the Lord: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (St. John 6:51) "and giveth life unto the world" (St. John 6:33). "He that eateth of this bread shall live forever" (St. John 6:58). He, then, who is moved by love, and who lives therein already in this world, has gained life eternal. Though still found here in this place of vanity, he feels himself caressed by those breezes of freedom which the righteous will enjoy at the Resurrection of the dead. This is precisely that mystical food and drink, above word or understanding, of which Christ promised His Apostles they would partake in the Kingdom of Heaven, when, as we know, He said to them: "That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (St. Luke 22:30).

9. Love, then, can more perfectly nourish a person, and more effectively so, than any food or drink. To this calm, peaceful, and leeward port—that is, blessed love—one cannot arrive unless he first sails across the noetic sea of the passions, which lies between us and this sure harbor of salvation. We are able to sail this sea by travelling on the ship of repentance, securely guided by the fear of God towards the harbor of love. This journey will take us to the far reaches, with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

10. When we are finally moored in this safe harbor of love, which is untroubled by waves and tempests, then we can disembark from that which transported us; for, as the Lord says, "Love casts out fear," whereupon we, no longer fearful, come to enjoy, in this harbor, its spiritual beauty and Grace, finding, as well, satiety in the sweetness of God, in

Whom, through love, we constantly find ourselves dwelling.

11. It is said of a water fowl, the siren, that when one hears its melodic song, he is so captivated that he is carried away by it and, on account of its sweetness, forgets all of the necessities of life, to the point of dying from the inebriation which the pleasure that its song evokes.

12. The same result is observed in the soul, when it is energized by love. From the moment that the soul is overcome by the heavenly sweetness of love, it too is stunned by the revelation of the mysteries of God; and so captured is one by this pleasure, that he lives for it alone, longing for it without satiety. Therefore, under the power and grasp of this pleasure, the body becomes dead to its impulses—not only those above nature, but also the natural impulses which are implanted in it, such as hunger, thirst, etc.

**E. From the *Gerontikon***

1. The following is said of a certain ascetic Elder: When he was dying in Sketis, the brothers surrounded his death bed and, having done all that was proper to prepare him for death, began to weep. At one point, the dying Elder laughed; after a while, he laughed a second time; and yet a third time he laughed again.

2. This raised the curiosity of the brothers, and one of them asked: "Why are you laughing, Elder, while we are weeping?" The Elder replied, "The first time I laughed because all of you fear death; the second time I laughed because you are not ready to face it; and the third time because I am departing from a place of labor and tribulations and ascending to a place of rest."

Having said these things, the Elder forthwith reposed.

3. Abba Anthony said: "I no longer fear God, but I love Him." He said this because "perfect love casteth out fear" (I St. John 4:18).

4. Once Abba Ammoun of Mt. Nitria visited Abba Anthony. "I," he said to him, "undertake far more ascetic labors than you. Why, then, do people exalt your name more than mine?"

Abba Anthony replied, "Because I love God more than you."

5. The Fathers relate that one of the Elders once implored God to see the souls of the departed Holy Fathers. God deigned him worthy and he saw all of them (in Paradise), except for Abba Anthony.

"Where is Abba Anthony?" he asked of the one who showed him the Fathers.

Abba Anthony, his other-worldly companion told him, "is found in that place where God is."

* "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear" (I St. John 4:18).

** The meaning here is lofty. The conscience searches a man for whatever evil deeds he has done and by way of which he has saddened God in the past; this searching gives birth to the fear of God, and the fear of God wholly cleanses the soul.

*** "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10).

**** "And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness" (Colossians 3:14).

***** "And Jesus answered him, The first of all of the commandments is, Hear O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (St. Mark 12:29-30). "And the Lord shall purge thy heart...to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live" (Deuteronomy 30:6).

• More easily to understand this statement by the Apostle Paul, let me add here the interpretation of it proffered by Professor P. Trembelas [d. 1977, Professor of Theology at the University of Athens—*Trans.*] in his hermeneutical commentary on the New Testament: "However, we, in every action, do what we do with sincerity and without self-interest and without caring for our own aims. And whether we be mad in praising ourselves, we do so for the glory of God, for we aim thereby not to diminish the dignity of Apostleship and impede the progress of the Gospel. Whether with moderation and humility we speak of ourselves, we do so for your own benefit, that we might teach you, that is, humility of mind by our own example. And we have these selfless motives because the love which Christ has shown to us draws us all together and keeps us bound to Him"—*A note by the Editor of the fourth edition of the Greek text of* The Evergetinos.

•• By the "inward gaze," to which we attribute "mental perception" in this text, we mean the conception of spiritual reality, not by logic, but through faith, in concord with a metaphysical notion of faith: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

••• This energy is not only a conception beyond nature and the comprehension of lofty and surpassing states, but also the movement of the soul towards these states. This energy creates the opposite state of that to which the Divine Apostle Paul alludes in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians (2:11), saying: "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion," which enthralls the soul by falsehood.

•••• We shall see the meaning of this more clearly in the interpretation of the passage, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). The substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things unseen are those things that we should grasp in the phrase, "the sensation of the heart" [that which is sensed or grasped in the heart—*Trans.*].

••••• "...Love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10).

† "I said unto the transgressors, Transgress not; and to the sinners, Lift not up the horn. Lift not up thy horn on high, and speak not unrighteousness against God" (Psalm 74:5-6); and "Let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak iniquity proudly and contemptuously against the righteous" (Psalm 30:19).

†† The point here is splendid: through faith we grope for reality, whereas through love we come to enjoy it, to live it.

††† "Knowledge" and "ignorance" do not have, in this respect, the meaning of learning and a lack of learning, but refer to inner understandings that are gained in the soul through faith and love.

†††† In this regard, see Epistles I and II of the Divine Apostle Paul to the Corinthians. The visionary St. Paul, while sojourning in Ephesus, was informed of certain irregularities and scandals that had occurred among the Christians of Corinth. Thus, he wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians, between 54-55 A.D. In it, he reprimands them, urging them to correct these things. He wrote again about this to the same Corinthians in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians (II, chapters 1-11 and elsewhere).

††††† This Divine author applies allegorically herein the passage: "[T]he Lord giveth wisdom to the blind" (Psalm 145:8).

‡ "Thou hast captivated me with yearning, O Christ, Thou hast changed me by Thy Divine Love" (preparation prayer for Holy Communion).

‡‡ "I speak as a fool" (II Corinthians 11:23); "We are fools for Christ's sake" (1 Corinthians 4:10).

## Hypothesis V

*That the greatest achievement among the virtues is silence (*hesychia*), when one living in silence does so with full knowledge of its meaning; greatness of soul is needed to achieve this. What silence with knowledge is and how one may achieve it.*

### A. From the Life of St. Arsenios

1. The great Arsenios, while still in the world, ardently yearned for silence; he would, therefore, most earnestly beseech God that He might vouchsafe him to satisfy his desire.

One day, then, while praying, he heard a voice from Heaven telling him:

"Arsenios, flee from disturbances and you will be saved."

2. Having heard this voice, the great Arsenios lost no time. He forthwith left his worldly cares and disturbances and set off with all haste for Sketis, where he joined himself to the Fathers living there in asceticism, and shortly thereafter surpassed them in struggles. He was not, for that matter, uninitiated in spiritual labors, many times before having kept company with ascetics; nor did Sketis and the monastic life first acquaint him with toiling for the attainment of virtue.

3. But even before the Saint moved to Sketis, he bridled the leaping of his heart by the fear of God and attended to the acquisition of virtue. He was also accustomed to ascetical labors, such that, though living amidst such a multitude (of dignitaries) and so many disturbances, he nevertheless had the boldness to say with the Prophet-King David: "I am alone" (Psalm 140:10). Thus, when he had settled in Sketis and was numbered with the Fathers living there in asceticism, it was not long before he proved to be first among them, and they heeded him as a Teacher. They would, therefore, eagerly accept his counsel on whatever matter each felt the need to ask his advice.

4. One of them, then, once asked the great Arsenios the following question:

"What is your opinion with regard to monks who travel to foreign places and remain there for a short or long time?"

The great Arsenios answered:

"If the need arises for a monk to go to a foreign place or foreign city, he must assiduously abide by this rule: At all costs, he must avoid making acquaintance with anyone at all and must not grow bold or familiar with anyone. Providing that he adheres to this advice, he will undoubtedly much benefit himself."

5. Another monk, by the name of Mark, who was celebrated for his virtue, perceived the great Arsenios' inclination towards solitude and his systematic avoidance of the company of others. One day, then, he approached the Arsenios and asked him:

"Why do you avoid us? In keeping company with us, you run no risk of harming your soul; on the contrary, you stand to benefit us greatly."

6. The great Arsenios, with humble-mindedness and modesty, answered:

"God knows how much I love you; and I am truly supported by your love. But I am bound to suffer some harm, for I am unable to divide myself between God and man. Moreover, it is easier to please God than man. And this is so because the thousands and ten thousands of Holy Angels have but one purpose and one desire: to praise God and to fulfill His commands. Men, however, are never in agreement as to their goals and pursuits; they know not what they seek. Hence, it is much more difficult, as I said, to please wretched man than the All-Good God."

7. This is why Arsenios loved silence with all his soul and was distressed when visitors came to him, yearning as he did for constant communion with God alone. For this reason, his ascetic cell was situated at a distance of more than thirty miles from the cells of the other monks.*

8. One of the eldest Fathers once came to Abba Arsenios and said:

"My Father, my thoughts trouble me, for no longer do I have the strength, on account of my old age, to fast or to bear the toils and hardships of asceticism. I believe that it would be good at least to visit the sick and those who are suffering; for such visits would be a considerable token of love. What do you advise me to do?"

The great Arsenios, knowing the ploys and insidious aims of the demons, answered him:

"Go, eat, drink, and enjoy as much sleep as you deem sufficient. Only take care never to leave your cell for so much as a minute."

9. When, at one point, Sketis was being deserted, owing to the impending incursion of barbarians, the Saint also abandoned the perilous region with the other Fathers. As he departed from Sketis, he wept and was aflame with an overpowering yearning for silence. Well did he know that moving about or departing from one's place of silence spells sure death for the monk. However many spiritual good things monks acquire in silence, they will dissipate and lose them by moving about; for, by associating with those whom they would not, they oftentimes see and hear what they ought not.

10. On another occasion, Abba Arsenios went to visit certain monks. Near the monks' cells were planted reeds that were gently blowing in the wind. Abba Arsenios thus said to these monks: "What is this commotion? Do you not know that he who truly loves silence cannot abide so much as the voice of a sparrow? How, then, can you, being bothered by such noises, keep your minds clear in all of this commotion, so as to attain tranquility?"

11. Another time, the great Arsenios discovered that a certain brother was coming to visit him. Without further ado, he began to throw stones at him, thereby driving him away. One cannot say that this action was motivated by hatred for his brother. For who had managed to acquire, alongside the other virtues, more love for his neighbor than the great Arsenios? But he acted in this way so as to avoid the company of men and, as has been said, to preserve calm and silence with purity in his soul. By means of silence and calm, he sought to maintain the capacity of his soul to enjoy Divine visions.

12. Such being the case, however, he did not perform this action impetuously or without discernment; rather, he knew, from the inner assurance of Divine Grace, whom he should drive away—that is, those who might disturb his inner silence—as well as whom he should receive and offer beneficial words of instruction or consolation. He also knew whom he should accept and with whom he should keep company, not for the purpose of exchanging words of benefit or for edifying

discussions, but for the purpose of practicing with them ascetic silence, as the following incident reveals.

13. A certain brother was overcome by a desire to visit the great Arsenios. Now then, when he arrived at the Church in Sketis, he asked to see the Saint. So, the monks sent one of the brothers to show him the cell of the great Arsenios. Having arrived, they both knocked on his door. The Divine Arsenios immediately opened to them, received them with joy, and embraced them, after which all three sat down in silence, neither the visitors nor Arsenios uttering a word. After quite some time had passed in silence, the Elder not having said anything, the monk who had accompanied the stranger, in order to show him Arsenios' cell, said to the Saint quietly: "I, my brother, shall go back." And the stranger replied: "And I shall follow you, since my stay here has proved to be in vain."

14. So, the two left the cell and departed. On the way, the stranger asked the monk escorting him to lead him to Abba Moses, who had formerly been a robber.

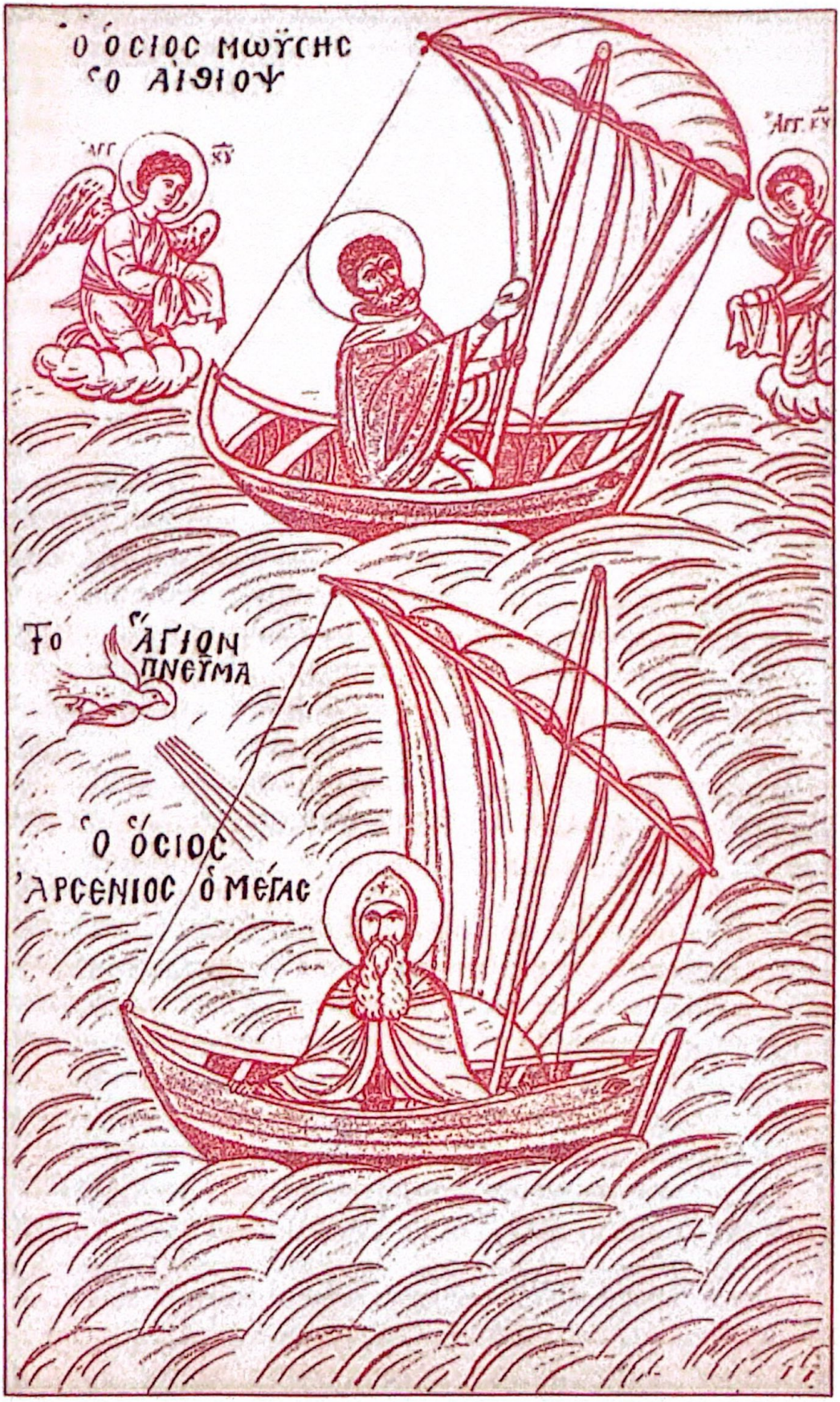
They did indeed, then, visit Abba Moses, who received them with joy and kindness and spoke with them on spiritual matters without restraint. With this conduct, Abba Moses refreshed his visitor, who departed with gratification and enthusiasm. On the way, the monk escorting the stranger asked him:

"In your opinion, my brother, which of the two is greater in virtue?"

"Most certainly the one who showed us hospitality and gave us spiritual rest, that is, Abba Moses," he responded.

15. One of the great ascetic Elders, having learned of this incident, became perplexed and knew not whom to praise: Abba Arsenios, with his strict silence, or Abba Moses, with his edifying and hospitable speech. He fervently besought God to reveal to him what he desired to learn.

Indeed, after persistent prayer, he saw the following revelatory dream: Standing on a riverbank, he beheld two boats sailing down the river. One of the two held the Divine Arsenios, sailing peacefully and made resplendent and warmed by the All-Holy Spirit; on board the other boat was Abba Moses, escorted by Angels who were feeding him honey and honey cakes.




*St. Moses the Ethiopian and St. Arsenios the Great*

16. Through this dream, the man of God at once understood that both Abba Arsenios and Abba Moses were wholly worthy in the eyes of God; yet Arsenios' silence for the sake of God was more pleasing to God than Moses' hospitality for man's sake. Much the greater, according to this revelatory dream, was the silence of Arsenios, since he was accompanied by the Holy Spirit, whereas Moses was escorted by Angels of God Almighty. That Abba Moses was being fed by Angels signifies the good of hospitality. But that the Grace of the Divine Spirit was more pleased with the silence of Arsenios will be revealed even more vividly in the following example.

17. An Elder once arrived at the skete of Abba Arsenios, desiring to speak with him for his spiritual benefit. But since Abba Arsenios was confined in his cell practicing Godly silence, he resolved not to knock on the door of the cell, so as not to disturb him. Nevertheless, he stooped down at a small window to view the interior of the cell and saw that the Saint was all ablaze. To be sure, the visitor who witnessed the miracle from the window was also worthy, by reason of the purity of his soul, of such a vision. Following this amazing sight, the Elder knocked on the door of the cell and Arsenios came out. Seeing the astonishment of his visitor so clearly etched on his face, he asked him:

"How long have you been here? Perhaps you saw something?"

The visitor, however, concealed from the great Arsenios what he had seen.

18. And this admirable fact was also characteristic of the conduct of the great Arsenios: Never did he put forward for discussion matters of Scripture, nor did he correspond with anybody on such matters. He did so not because he was unable to speak or write (such a shortcoming had no place in one for whom profound and beautiful speech were as easy as casual and common speech is for others), but rather because he was accustomed to keeping silent and was averse to ostentation. These two things (his silence and aversion to ostentation) were the reasons for his conduct.

19. Hence, whether in Church or at other *synaxeis* in Sketis, he assiduously avoided seeing others and being seen by them; this is why he would take care to stand behind a column or other barrier, so as to hide himself and avoid encounters with others, remaining unseen by them. And he did all of these things because he wished, and constantly sought,

to be attentive to himself and to collect his thoughts, that he might easily ascend to God.

20. Arsenios the Great would continually murmur to himself: "And so, Arsenios, you departed. You left for the desert for one purpose alone, distancing yourself from the world. And what was that purpose? To be entirely pleasing to God. Hence, take care to do those things that are pleasing to Him." Apart from this, he was also wont to repeat to himself unceasingly, in the form of a *Troparion*: "Ofttimes have I repented for speaking, but never for keeping silent."

For precisely this reason, he would avoid associating with people; and he would only break off his stillness and silence when, illumined by God, he deemed encounters with others necessary and pleasing to God.

21. Once, for example, he learned that some strangers had come to Sketis. He immediately told his disciples:

"Ask the strangers for what reason they came all the way to Sketis."

His disciples did indeed ask the reason for the strangers' presence, and they hastened to inform him.

"Abba," they said, "these men are passers-by and are going to the Thebaid on business."

He took this news as reason not to break his beloved silence.

"Since, then, they have no need of me," he said to his disciples, "it is not necessary for them to see me. Attend to them and let them continue on their way."

**B. From the *Gerontikon***

1. Abba Arsenios, while still living in the palace of the Emperor,** fervently besought God, saying: "Lord, indicate to me how to be saved." One day, then, while he was praying he heard a voice telling him: "Arsenios, flee from men and you will be saved." Having heard this apocalyptic voice, he straightaway abandoned worldly things, departed for Sketis, and joined himself to the other ascetics practicing asceticism in that region.

2. Having settled in Sketis, he prayed again to God, repeating the same words as those in his previous prayer. He soon heard anew the revelatory voice, saying:

"Arsenios, flee, keep silence, and be still; for only thus will you not

sin. Taking flight, silence, and stillness are the roots of sinlessness."

Thus, by putting these recommendations into practice, Abba Arsenios gained distinction, within a short space of time, as a celebrated Father and surpassed, in *theoria* and in knowledge, nearly all of the Fathers who were leading the ascetic life in that region.

3. Certain Elders once came to Abba Arsenios, earnestly beseeching to speak with him. Abba Arsenios, who, as is well known, avoided the company of others, yielded before the insistent entreaties of the Elders and opened the door of his cell to them, consenting to speak with them. Having sat down a short while, Abba Arsenios' visitors straightaway asked him:

"We beg you, Abba, to tell us, with regard to those who live in silence and never meet with men: Why do they act in this way?"

Abba Arsenios answered them:

"When a maiden abides unwedded in her father's house, many are they who wish to be betrothed to her. Once she has taken a husband, however, she is no longer pleasing to everyone; some praise her, whereas others comment on her in a spirit of fault-finding. In this way, she no longer enjoys the general esteem and respect that she enjoyed while remaining concealed in the rooms of her father's house. So it is with the soul, when it transgresses the bounds of silence and stillness and begins to come into contact and communion with people; it is then unable to please everyone, and is liable to lose the honor it had from God."

4. Abba Doulas said: "If the Enemy of our soul induces us, under various pretexts, whether legitimate or illegitimate, to abandon silence, let us pay no heed to him; for nothing else is so effective in helping us clearly to discern his ploys and his wiles—and not to be led astray thereby—as the help that comes from silence and fasting. These two virtues, more so than the other virtues, render the inner eyes of the soul perceptive."

5. The same Abba said: "Endeavor to cut off relations with the multitude, lest your mind, embroiled in circumstances and cares, become dulled and thereby unable to enjoy, in purity and clarity, the free air of silence."

6. Abba Theodore of Pherme said: "Whoever has come to know the sweetness of his cell continually takes refuge in it; and he does this, not

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*Abba Doulas*

out of hatred or contempt for his neighbor, but because he wishes to enjoy the delight of the silence of his cell."

7. It was said of Abba Isidore that when the Elder had a presentiment of someone's visit, he would take refuge in the innermost part of his cell, so that he might not be discovered. When asked by the brothers why he would flee during visits, he answered:

"The wild beasts, also, are saved by fleeing to their lairs."

The Elder said this in his desire to edify his disciples, so that they would also love silence and would pursue a way of life free from distractions and spiritually destructive occupations.

8. Abba Moses said to Abba Makarios, who was abiding in Sketis:

"I wish to live in silence, but the brothers, with their frequent visits, do not allow me this. What do you advise me to do?"

Abba Makarios answered:

"I see that you have an indulgent character and do not have the strength to refuse meeting with a monk who visits you. Hence, if you truly wish to live in stillness, go to the inner desert—to Petra—and there you will surely find rest."

9. Abba Aio also asked Abba Makarios:

"Tell me a word, Father, about how I might be saved."

Abba Makarios answered him:

"Avoid associating with others, sit in your cell, weep for your sins, and do not wish for anyone to speak with you; then you will surely be saved."

10. And Abba Moses said the following with regard to fleeing from people and silence:

"One who avoids the company of men and garrulousness resembles a ripe grape full of succulent sweetness. By contrast, a person who takes pleasure in the company of others and in much talking resembles a sour grape—that is, an unripe grape, which gives no enjoyment to the one who eats it."

11. At one point, Abba Joseph became ill, and he sent one of his disciples to Abba Theodore with the following message:

"Come, that I might see you before I leave my earthly tabernacle."

This took place in the middle of the week. Abba Theodore, however,

did not go, but by the same messenger sent word to Abba Joseph:

"If you remain until Saturday, I shall come. But if you depart from this world before Saturday, then we will only see each other in the next world."

12. A brother asked Abba Rufus:

"My father, please explain to me what silence is and what benefit comes of it."

Abba Rufus readily answered him:

"Silence is when a monk abides in his cell with knowledge and fear of God, and his soul is far from resentment and haughtiness. Silence practiced in this way is the source and author of all of the virtues and protects the monk from the flaming darts of the Enemy, without leaving him exposed to being wounded by the Enemy. Hence, my brother," Abba Rufus continued, "take care to acquire this silence and to have the fear of death always in your memory; for you know not the hour when the thief will come. Take heed to be unceasingly vigilant for the safeguarding of your own soul."

13. Abba Ammoun came one day from Rhaïthou to Klysma*** to meet with Abba Sisoes. He saw that the latter was sorrowful because he had left the desert; so he said to him:

"Why are you distressed, Abba? What could you have done in the desert from this point on, since you have already arrived at such old age?"

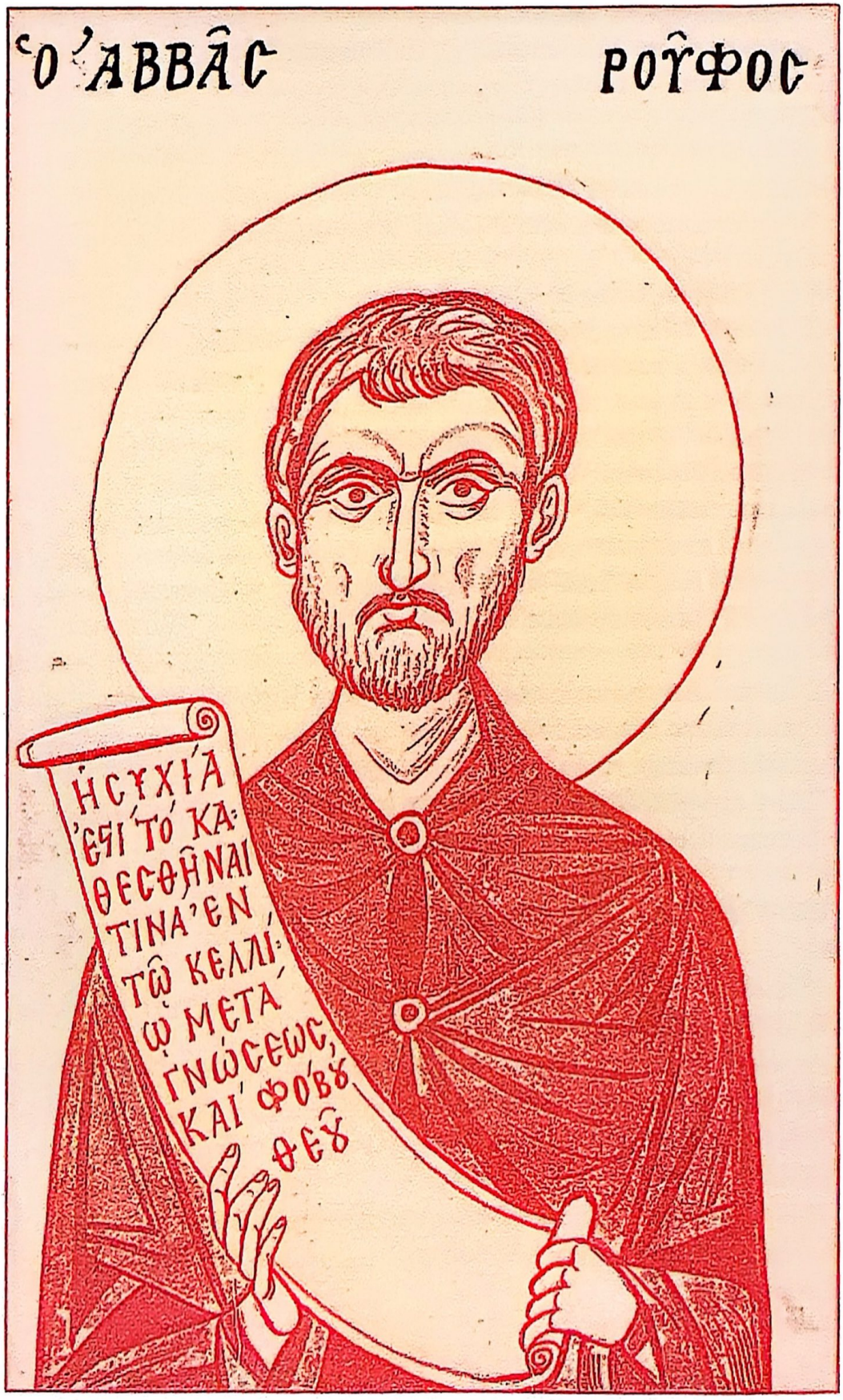
The Elder looked at him reproachfully and said with some bitterness:

"What are you saying, Ammoun? Was freedom from thoughts, alone, not enough for me in the desert?"

As we know, Abba Sisoes remained on the mountain of Abba Anthony, after the latter's death, for seventy-two whole years in asceticism and silence, after having previously passed a number of years in Sketis with Abba Or.

It is thus significant and noteworthy how, after such lengthy and toilsome ascesis, he yearned for the desert; for there he enjoyed calm and silence.

14. Abba Sisoes was sitting in Klysma one day, in full possession of his senses and in his right mind. At one point, as if forgetting where he was, he said to his disciple: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ΚΑΙ ΦΟΒΟΥ
ΘΕΟΥ

*Abba Rufus*

"My child, water the palm trees."

His disciple answered:

"Have you forgotten, Elder, that we are in Klysma?"

"What am I doing in Klysma? Take me back to the mountain," said the Elder.

15. An Elder said: "When a monk sits in his cell, keeping silence and laboring for the sake of virtue, this is a precondition for his soul to be filled with every spiritual good thing."

16. The same Elder said: "A monk is obliged, even should he suffer bodily harm, to disregard it; and by this disregard, he will purchase his spiritual calm and silence."

17. A brother once visited an Elder who had reached a measure of perfection and said to him:

"Abba, I am wearing myself out."

So, the Elder responded:

"Sit in your cell and God will refresh you."

18. Abba Daniel recounted the following event concerning Abba Arsenios:

"A magistrate**** once came from Rome to Sketis, taking to the great Arsenios the will [last testament—*Trans.*] of a relative of his, a Senator who had died, leaving Arsenios a very large inheritance.

"Having taken the will into his hands and read its contents, he was on the point of tearing it to pieces without a second thought.

"'For God's sake,' the magistrate cried out, throwing himself at the great Arsenios' feet, 'I beg you not to tear it up, or they will cut off my head.'

"Restraining himself, so as not to put the bearer of the will in danger, the great Arsenios told him:

"'I died before he did. Why, then, should I occupy myself with the will of one who has recently died?'

"With these words, he let the magistrate return to Rome, without accepting the will at all."

19. Abba Theodore of Pherme acquired three good and edifying books. Encountering Abba Makarios one day, then, he said:

"Abba, I have three good books, from the reading of which I am ed-

ified. The brothers also read these books and are edified. Tell me, then, what am I to do? Should I keep them for the spiritual benefit that the brothers and I derive from reading them, or should I sell them and give the revenue to the poor?"

Abba Makarios answered him:

"Various deeds, such as reading, are good things; but of greater value is a lack of possessions. This, of course, primarily applies to those who have gone beyond the level of the practical life and are advancing, by means of silence, to Divine vision."

As soon as Elder Theodore of Pherme heard this, he hastened to sell his books and distributed the revenue to the poor.

20. Abba Cassian recounted the following:

"A certain monk once lived in a cave in the desert. He was informed by his relatives according to the flesh that his father was gravely ill and on the point of death. They therefore invited him to come to receive his inheritance.

"So, the monk answered them:

"'I died to the world and those in the world some time ago; how, then, is it possible for one who is dead to receive an inheritance from someone who is alive?'"

21. One of the ascetic Fathers recounted the following story: A renowned ascetic once lived in the desert. He had been vouchsafed many spiritual gifts from God, and was celebrated throughout the entire region for his virtuous life. His fame reached as far as the Emperor himself, who, out of piety, sent for the monk and invited him to come to him, so as to be counted worthy of receiving his blessing.

They, did, in fact, meet. The Emperor was greatly benefited by this meeting and, moved by love and respect, offered the monk a good deal of gold. The monk gladly accepted it and returned to his place of asceticism.

With the Emperor's money, he began to take care of his garden and to acquire various material goods.

22. One day, owing to his renown, a certain demoniac was brought to the monk to be healed.

Rebuking the demon lurking within the sick man, the monk said:

"Depart from God's creature."

The demon insolently replied:

"I take no notice of you. ...I do not listen to you."

"Why?" the monk asked.

And the demon again responded:

"Because you have also become like us. You abandoned the sole care and concern that you had for God and busy yourself with earthly cares and matters."

23. A Cœnobiarch [the Abbot of a cœnobitic monastery—*Trans.*] asked the Most Holy Pope and Patriarch Cyril of Alexandria [Pope, or "Father," is a term that was applied in the early Christian Church to a number of Patriarchs, and not just the Patriarch of Rome—*Trans.*]:

"I beseech you to tell me which manner of monastic life is superior: the one that we lead in the *cœnobia*, having brothers under obedience to us and caring for the salvation of the soul of each one, or the life led by the anchorites in the desert, who are solely occupied with the salvation of their own souls?"

Patriarch Cyril replied:

"It is difficult for us to differentiate between Elias and Moses,***** for both were pleasing to God."

24. An Elder said: "I believe that God is not so unjust as to take us from one prison and throw us into another."

25. Concerning Abba John the Short, the following instructive incident from his life has been told:

He once entered the Church in Sketis so as to attend the service, and there he heard a lively dispute among the monks. Grieved, he returned to his cell. Before entering, however, he went three times around the outside of his cell, and then entered.

Certain ones who saw him, being unable to explain this strange behavior, respectfully asked him:

"Why, Elder, before entering, did you go around the outside of your cell three times?"

Elder John the Short answered them:

"My ears were buzzing with the vigorous disputation among the brothers, so I went three times around my cell in order to clear my mind; and thereby obtaining stillness and peace of mind, I entered my cell."

26. The same Abba, John the Short, said:

"It is indeed imprisonment for you to sit enclosed in your cell with

unceasing remembrance of God; but this was the prison implied by the Lord when he said: 'I was in prison, and ye came unto me' (St. Matthew 25:36)."

27. Concerning the same Abba John the Short, it was said that, in order to achieve total concentration and constant remembrance of God through voluntary self-confinement, whenever he returned to his cell from the harvest or from a meeting with other ascetic Elders, he would commit himself to an intense effort at collecting his mind through prayer, pious study, and psalmody, until his mind returned to its previous state of blessed silence.

28. A brother greatly besought Abba Sisoes to tell him something instructive. Abba Sisoes said in response:

"Sit in your cell, keeping your mind free from every earthly or worldly thought and care, and fall with abundant tears before God; then you will surely find spiritual rest."

29. An Elder said to his disciples:

"Just as a soldier or hunter, when in the heat of the battle, cannot be concerned about whether anyone else is wounded or survives, since each feels anxiety and watches out for himself alone, so in a similar way must a monk take heed and feel anxiety in his struggle against temptations."

30. On another occasion, the same Elder said: "Practice silence, attend to nothing worldly or vain, pay attention to your reading and inner prayer, sleep and wake with fear of God, and thereafter never fear the violent attacks of the Evil One."

31. Another Elder said: "Though the holy ascetics labored in this present world, nonetheless they already enjoyed, here, a portion of the eternal rest and bliss of the Heavenly life; and this portion was the occasion for them to remain free from the toilsome and exhausting cares of the world."

32. Abba Alonios expressed the following instructive opinion: "If a man does not say from his heart: 'In this world, only God and I exist,' he will not find spiritual repose."

33. Paisios, the brother of Abba Poimen, was distracted with someone outside of his cell. Abba Poimen did not desire this acquaintanceship, so he went and visited Abba Ammonas. As soon as the two Abbas met, Poimen said to Ammonas:

"My brother Paisios is interacting with someone, but I do not like this acquaintanceship."

Having listened with attention, Abba Ammonas replied:

"Poimen, are you still living according to the ways of the world? Go, my friend, to your cell, and put in your mind and your heart that you have been in the tomb for a full year."

34. Another Elder developed the following allegorical interpretation of a passage from the Old Testament, correlating it with the need for silence:

"The Shunammite woman received Elissaios, though she lived alone and had no relations with anyone else. The Fathers," said the Elder, "regard the Shunammite as symbolic of the soul and Elissaios as symbolic of the Holy Spirit. Hence, at whatever hour the soul is far from corporeal concerns and worldly cares, the Spirit of God visits it; and thereafter, it will be able to give birth, though it be barren.•

35. Abba Sisoes, when sitting in his cell, always shut his door; the same was also done by all of the other Fathers.

36. Two friends agreed together to become monks. They carried out their agreement and gave themselves over to harsh struggles, displaying a lofty and virtuous monastic life. It so happened that one of them became a Cœnobiarch in a monastery, while the other remained an anchorite perfected in ascesis. For this, God endowed the latter with many supernatural capabilities and great miracles; thus, he would expel demons from those possessed, heal the ill, and foretell the future.

37. Now the Cœnobiarch, being informed of the spiritual progress of the anchorite and of the miracles he performed, and also of the spiritual gifts with which his former friend had been endowed, distanced himself from others and remained alone in silence for three weeks. During this period of reclusion, he fervently besought God to reveal to him why it was that the anchorite was working miracles and had been vouchsafed this honor by God, while he himself had not been counted worthy of even the slightest spiritual gift from God.

38. Granting the Cœnobiarch's request, God sent him an Angel, who revealed to him the following:

"Learn, then," said the Angel of the Lord, "that the anchorite remains alone before God and ceaselessly, night and day, groans and weeps with compunction and contrition of heart; and he hungers, thirsts, and endures for the Lord's sake. By contrast, you have many cares and take pleasure in the company of people. Hence, the comfort that people offer you is sufficient for you."

39. An ascetic Elder said: "One should not concern himself with anything other than how to fear God. Even if the need should arise to attend to bodily needs, I am never preoccupied by this care for long, nor do I give any thought to satisfying it before the prescribed time."

40. Abba Sisoes said: "If a person is found to attend to you, you must not tell him how he should act."

41. Another Elder said: "Disregard for life's cares, silence, and secret meditation•• give rise to chastity and purity of soul."

42. The following edifying and instructive dialogue was carried out between a younger monk and an Elder.

The brother: My Father, how must a monk spend his time in his cell?

The Elder: He must avoid acquaintances with many people, so that his thought is quieted, in order that true and saving knowledge (that is, noetic communion with God) might abide in him.

43. The brother: If the monk should leave his cell, how must he act?

The Elder: The monk is a dove. And just as various wild birds peck at a dove and destroy its beauty when, the time having come for it to leave its nest and spread its wings, it remains out too long and is overtaken by night, so it is with the monk. He also leaves his cell at the hour of the *synaxis* of the Fathers of the skete in order to spread out and expand his thoughts. But if he stays out late from his cell, he is then attacked by the demons and his thoughts are darkened.•••

44. The brother: How, Father, does the Devil succeed in getting a monk out of his cell?

The Elder: The Devil, my child, resembles a charmer of wild beasts. As is well known, the charmer, by a few simple and insignificant words,

is able to get a wild beast out of its lair. Then, having captured it, he drives it to the city squares, where he forces it to display itself in ridiculous ways, so as to make the people laugh at it. And when this animal has grown to such an extent that it no longer amuses the people, its master either burns it or drowns it in the sea, to be rid of it.

The same things are suffered by the wretched monk at the hands of the Devil, when his thoughts beguile and entice him to leave his cell.

45. Another brother asked an Elder:
"Father, how should I practice silence in my cell?"
The Elder responded:
"Sit in your cell and have no recollection at all of people."

46. The brother asked again:
"And how must the heart of the reclusive monk be engaged, so as to be regularly occupied with silence?"••••
The Elder again replied:
"The perfect work of the monk is to have his attention constantly and unceasingly turned to God, without being distracted by any other thought or care."

47. Three holy anchorites once met together in a certain place. For the sake of mutual spiritual edification and benefit, each of the three asked the others to relate to him with what noetic activity he occupied himself when enclosed in his cell.

48. Thus, the first humbly began to recount: "I, my brothers, have from the moment that I began to live in silence, completely crucified myself••••• on the cross of voluntary ascesis and concentration, and thereby have become estranged from all external temptations. I unceasingly keep in mind the deeper meaning of the injunction of Holy Scripture: 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their yoke from us' (Psalm 2:3). At the same time, I have raised a mental wall between my soul and bodily cares, and say to myself: 'Take heed! Precisely as a person behind a wall cannot see one walking on the other side of it, in the same way you must not desire to see anything of the outside world, but should watch vigilantly over your inner self, daily awaiting the recompense of your hopes in God. In such a way, you should live as a foreigner and a stranger in this world and, first and foremost, as if you were to be released tomorrow from this vain world.'

49. "And reflecting on the Angels, who continuously ascend and descend in order to collect souls, and constantly awaiting my end, I say: 'My God, my heart is ready.'† With the eyes of my soul, I also see my Holy [Guardian—*Trans.*] Angel beside me, standing to my right. Beholding him constantly before me, I keep strict watch over myself, because I fear him; for I believe that he examines all of my actions and daily ascends to God and reveals my deeds, my words, and my thoughts."

50. When the first anchorite had finished his account, the second spoke as follows: "As for me, my brothers, I behold as a reality the Church of the Noetic Powers, which Church transcends matter and the senses and in the midst of which I behold the Lord of Glory more radiant than all. And if it should happen that I am overtaken by listlessness, I then turn my mind to perceive the wondrous beauty of the Angels and the hymns that they unceasingly send up to God, and the enthralling melodies thereof, and immediately I am elevated by the musical sounds of the Angels, whereupon, from that height, I regard all of the things on earth as detritus, unworthy of mention."

51. The third and final anchorite also spoke of that of which his noetic activity consisted. "I, my brothers, beginning in the morning, noetically ascend to the Lord; and, having worshipped Him, I cast myself before Him, confessing my transgressions. Following that, I descend slightly from this height that transcends contemplation and venerate the Holy Angels, beseeching them to intercede to God for me and all of creation.††

52. "When I have completed this veneration, I then descend into the abyss and go about the various parts of Hell, seeing my fellow men being tortured, whereupon I also weep with them, regarding myself as their fellow convict. There, in this place of torment, I behold unceasing tears and laments, which no one can describe, and the sea of fire, gushing and roaring frightfully, its fiery waves soaring to a height greater than the highest mountains, into the misery and calamity of which countless people have been cast, guarded by wild and gruff angels (demons).

53. "These condemned people burn exactly like firewood, yet without being consumed; rather, continuously abiding in the fire, they moan in despair and gnash their teeth, with heart-rending cries and wailing.

God turns His mercy away from them on account of their sins and offenses. Together with them, then, I also lament, and thus preserve mourning in my heart, according to the saying: 'My tears have been my bread by day and by night' (Psalm 41:4)."

54. A brother visited Abba Moses in Sketis, asking him to tell him something instructive.

Abba Moses said to him:

"Go, close yourself up in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything."

55. The same Abba Moses said: "He who has God near him and constantly has his thoughts turned to Him does very well not to allow anyone into his cell."

56. On another occasion, he said: "It is impossible for the heart to acquire Jesus without toil, humility, and unceasing prayer."

57. The following incident was related about an ascetic Elder who remained in complete reclusion in his cell, from whence he never departed. He never went even to Church, but communed noetically with God.

Now, this ascetic Elder had a brother according to the flesh who practiced asceticism in a nearby cell in Sketis. The Elder's brother grew ill. Having a presentiment of his death, he sent someone to the ascetic Elder, asking him to come, so that he might see him before he died.

58. The ascetic Elder answered his brother's messenger:

"I cannot come, because he is my brother according to the flesh."†††

The ill man sent someone once again, who transmitted the request:

"At least tonight, do come, that I might see you."

To the second exhortation, also, the ascetic Elder responded with the same resolve:

"I am unable; for if I see you, my heart will not remain pure from earthly thoughts and feelings during its communion and conversation with God."

And, indeed, the sick brother according to the flesh fell asleep in the Lord without their having come together.

59. Concerning Amma†††† Sarah, it was said that the cave in which

she lived in asceticism was situated above the banks of a river; and she remained in this cave for sixty whole years, without ever having looked down to see the river.

60. Abba Theodore of Pherme said: "If I do not cut off from myself feelings of sadness and a desire for company, these feelings, being worldly and carnal, will never permit me to be a monk."

61. A brother came to Abba Theodore to learn from him how to weave baskets. Indeed, he even brought cord†††† to the Abba. Elder Theodore arose with readiness, wet the cord to make it easy to handle, and began weaving. After giving him detailed instructions as to how to work, he left the brother alone and went into his cell, where he sat down to continue his concentration in silence and stillness. At the ordained time for ascetics (the ninth hour), he gave the brother food and sent him to his cell.

62. The next morning, when the brother arrived to continue his training in basket weaving, Abba Theodore said to him meekly:

"My brother, take your cord away from here and fare well; for as I understand it, you have come here to cast me into temptation and cares."

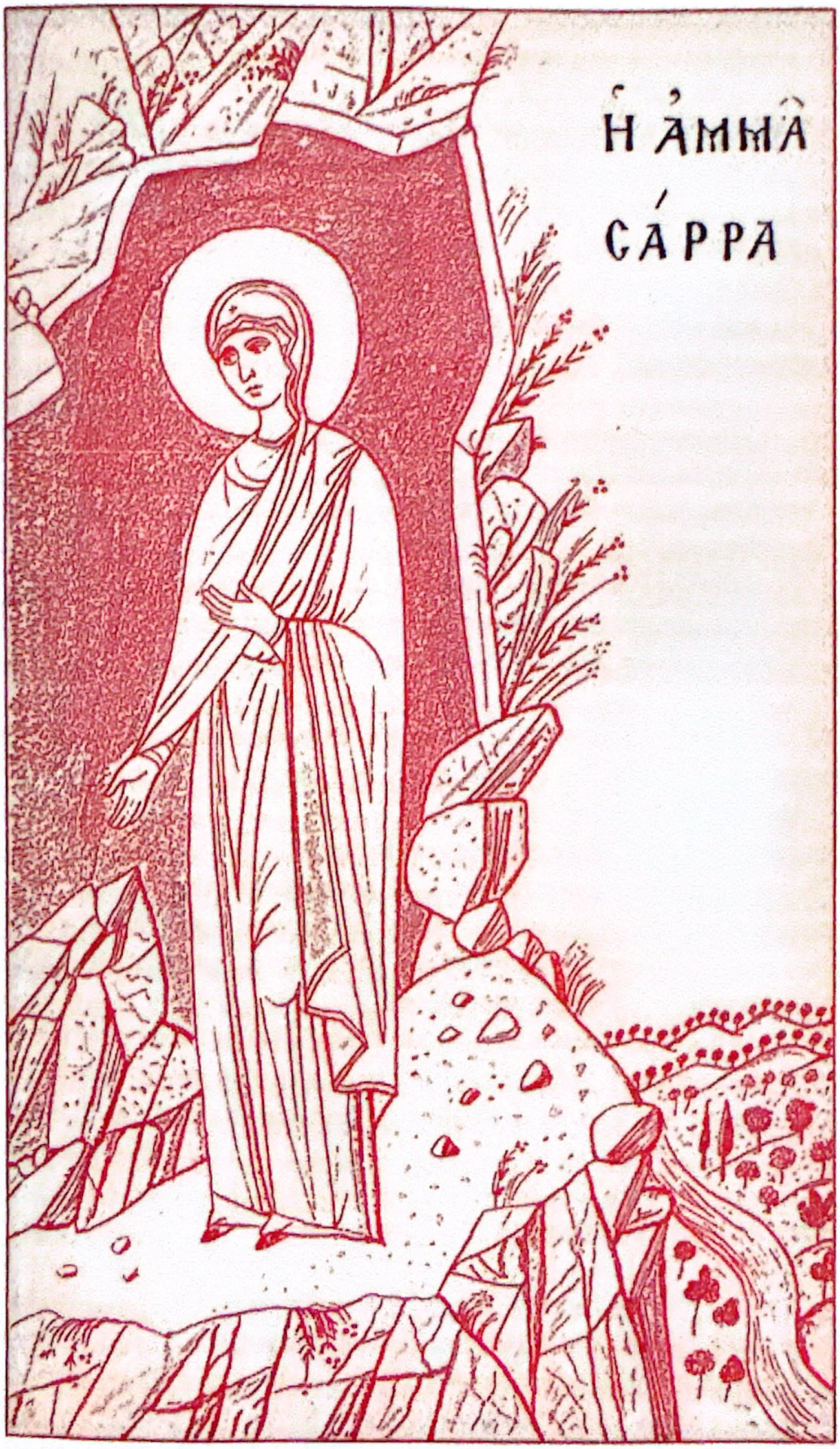
After this statement, he no longer allowed the brother to come into his cell.‡

63. Abba John would say: "If a man has within his soul a vessel of God, then he will be able to sit in his cell, even if there are no vessels of this present world in it. It is likewise possible for a person to remain in his cell when he has vessels of this world in it. But he who possesses no vessel at all, either of God or of this world, will assuredly not be able to remain even a minute in his cell.‡‡

64. A certain brother lived in a *cœnobion*, imposing a strict ascesis on himself.

Having learned of this, the brothers who lived in Sketis went to see him (since it probably seemed strange to them that a cœnobite could submit himself to strict ascesis within a *cœnobion*).

These skete dwellers, then, arrived at the place where the cœnobite was working. As soon as he saw them, the cœnobite broke off his work for a moment, prostrated himself before them, greeted them, and em-




*Amma Sarah*

braced them; following this, without further conversation, he returned to his place of work and again took up his handcraft.

65. When the brothers saw what he had done, they said to him:

"Who, Father John, gave you the monastic *schema* and tonsured you a monk? Your Elder should teach you that when a brother visits you, you must welcome him with courtesy, take his cloak, and say to him: 'Pray, my Father, for me, a sinner,' or 'Take a seat, my Father'!

"The sinful John," he replied, "does not waste his time on such man-pleasing courtesies."

66. A brother posed the following question to a renowned and greatly experienced Elder:

"My Elder, please tell me what thoughts I should have in my heart."

The Elder replied:

"All of the things thought about by man, insofar as they exist below Heaven (and therefore pertain to ephemeral and earthly matters), are vanity. Only he who persists in remembrance of Jesus is in the truth."

67. To the same Elder who gave the previous answer yet another question was posed:

"How ought a monk to be?"

To this question, he responded as follows:

"In my opinion, a monk must be completely alone—that is, free from every material care and earthly distraction—and must address himself to God alone; in other words, the perfect monk must think always and exclusively about God alone.

"Just as a grape drawn by the movement of the vine down to the ground is completely spoiled, in the same way the mind of the Hesychast ceases to turn to God when he concerns himself with earthly things."

### C. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

1. Silence greatly helps a monk, for it not only hinders him from doing something bad, but it also purifies his prayer, freeing it from every earthly thought; and it generates Godly mourning and compunction in his mind. Silence accomplishes all of these things because it is accompanied by these four other virtues: forbearance, meekness, vigilance, and temperance. Helped by these virtues, then, and preserving constant

and unceasing prayer, silence quickly ensures a monk much-desired freedom from passions.

2. Good, then, and beneficial is the ascesis of silence in every circumstance‡‡‡ for one living in stillness. Silence practiced for the sake of stillness is the mother of the wisest reflections, since the good spirit that gives rise to such reflections is disturbed and banished by garrulousness. This good spirit, which greatly gladdens the soul and illuminates the intellect, cannot act or manifest itself where there are noise and agitation, for through them fantasies (about earthly and worldly objects) take possession of the soul. Silence, like a noble and beautiful mother, perfectly and unerringly gives birth to virtues through constant and unbroken communion of the soul with God.

3. A monk who loves and seeks silence is beloved of God; for he, out of strong love for God, communicates with Him alone through pure prayer. Though he lives on earth, nonetheless his pious thought continuously resorts to heavenly things, and his mind's entire concern is how to please God, alone, and how to erect a temple to the Holy Spirit.

4. Such a monk struggles alongside the Angels by his way of life, always seeking remote and silent places (and also isolation from men), that he might succeed, by his great and unbroken silence and his freedom from every care, at being elevated to the level of conversation with God, thereby rendering his mind a clear spiritual mirror, without any blemish, in accordance with the example of the glorious Prophet Elias‡‡‡‡ and St. John the Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord.

5. Happy and fortunate is the monk who thinks and acts in this way. Both here on earth and in Heaven he is blessed. For he has regarded all earthly things as dung, that he might gain Christ alone‡‡‡‡‡ and succeed in passing through this transient life directed by a spirit of meekness and silence.

**D. From Abba Isaiah**

1. Abba Isaiah said the following: "He who wishes to find spiritual rest in his cell and not to be conquered by enmity toward anyone must completely distance himself from men in all things. Hence, he must abstain from condemning or justifying his fellow man, from praising or

publicizing the virtues of his neighbor, from grieving him in any insignificant matter, or from paying attention to his failings. He should not allow any thought or suspicion of enmity to prick his heart; nor should he display his knowledge to one who is ignorant or impose his will on the imprudent. He will then be able to know himself well and will unerringly discern what does him harm; and in this way, he will enjoy the repose he seeks."

2. Abba Isaiah said again: "He who practices silence must at all times search to see if he has eluded those who move through the air (i.e., the demons) and if he has been freed from their evil influence while still in this present life; for if he is subject to servitude to them, he has not yet succeeded in being liberated.◊ It is, therefore, evident that toil is required until the mercy of the Lord comes upon one."

3. On another occasion, Abba Isaiah said: "The Hesychast should be possessed by the fear of meeting God; indeed, so constant and persistent should this salvific fear be that it anticipates his very breath in frequency. As long as sin, by its sensual allurement, still has the power to influence the heart of the Hesychast, he has not yet laid the foundation of the fear of God in himself, and he is still far from the mercy of God."

4. Abba Isaiah also gave this beneficial counsel: "The Hesychast is in need of three things: to have unceasing fear of God, constantly and persistently to seek (the mercy of God), and to take care never to leave his heart free (to experience ephemeral and worldly sentiments). In addition, the Hesychast must be vigilant, lest he hear talk that does not benefit him, in which instance his toil is in danger of being completely squandered."◊◊

5. With regard to this, Abba Isaiah related the following concerning Abba Serapion: A certain Elder once questioned Abba Serapion, saying:

"Be so kind as to tell me how you see yourself."

Abba Serapion responded:

"I reckon myself similar to someone enclosed in a tower, who attentively looks outside and motions to those passing by not to dare approach him."

6. Then he who had questioned Abba Serapion said:

"And I see myself as being within a secure enclosure that I have

erected, and (on the apertures) in the enclosure walls, I have affixed iron bolt latches, so that, should anyone knock, I might make no mistake, but will ascertain who it is, or what type of person he is, and what his intention is, and not open up to him until he has passed by."◊◊◊

**E. From St. Diadochos**

1. He who continually examines the inclinations and feelings of his heart will unfailingly distance himself from the beautiful things of life on earth. For walking with the spirit as his guide, he is incapable of knowing carnal desires, since such a one takes his walks within the fortress of the virtues, where he has placed the virtues as guardians over the fortress of purity. Precisely for this reason, the machinations of the demons against him become powerless to harm him, even should the darts of carnal eros reach all the way to his senses.

2. When the soul, however, reaches the point of no longer desiring any of the beautiful things earthly life has to offer, then the attacks of the evil spirit become stronger and our whole mind and body are seized by a state of listlessness; that is, sluggishness and indifference in the accomplishment of any task.◊◊◊◊ This state of listlessness does not permit our soul to accomplish with pleasure the service of preaching or transmitting the Divine word. Nor, again, does it allow the soul to be possessed by an intense yearning for the future good things. It also brings to naught the way we live this temporal life, because we have nothing worthy of virtue to show. It even degrades our knowledge, either because it is such as has also been given to many others, or because we are not capable of acquiring something perfect.

3. We will avoid this passion of listlessness, which renders us spiritually lukewarm and sluggish, if we set very strict boundaries for our mind, aspiring solely after the remembrance of God. For only in this way is our mind able to return to its former fervor and to free itself from this destructive (pestilent) indifference. At any rate, our mind demands of us, when we have hindered all of its distractions through constant remembrance of God, that we should perform deeds that prove its constant turning to the remembrance of God.

4. Hence, we must give to our mind the (unceasing prayer), "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me." And this alone is sufficient for us

wholly to accomplish our goal. For, as Holy Scripture says, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:3). The mind should have this prayer so unceasingly before it that it has no time or opportunity to be distracted by other imaginings. That is to say, all of those who uninterruptedly meditate, in the depths of their hearts, upon the holy and glorious Name of Jesus will at some point be able to see the light of their minds; for the Name of the Lord, being preserved with ceaseless care in our intellects, consumes all of the filth that chances to be in the soul. "For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29), as Holy Scripture says.

5. Thus, the Lord henceforth calls the soul to great love of His glory. That is, when this glorious and much-desired Name is constantly in our thoughts, through the fervor of our heart and the memory of our mind, it makes us acquire the habit of loving the goodness of God, without anything still getting in our way. It is the precious Pearl;◊◊◊◊◊ and it is to the advantage of the one who finds it to sell all that he has in order to acquire it. And his find will bring him inexpressible joy and happiness.

6. When the soul is agitated by anger, darkened by debauchery, or bothered by a great distress, the mind cannot cleave to the remembrance of Christ Jesus, even should one try to constrain it. The mind becomes thoroughly darkened by the violence of the passions and thereafter loses a sense of itself. For this reason, the desire (for Christ) has nowhere to imprint its seal, that the mind might indelibly preserve this manner of meditation (the remembrance of Christ). For the memory becomes hardened (to God) through the violence of the passions.¶

7. When the soul is freed from these passions, however, even should forgetfulness (*lethe*) briefly steal away that which is desired (the repetition of the Divine Name of Jesus, which sweetens the mind), immediately, once again, the mind, having been exercised by continuous and arduous ascesis, occupies itself with this much-desired and salvific pursuit; indeed, the mind then also enjoys Grace, whereupon the soul prays along with it and retains the words, "Lord Jesus Christ." Both the mind and soul, in our beautiful but anguishing endeavor to retain the Divine Name, call to mind a tender mother teaching her baby to say the name "*fa*-ther," until the child becomes accustomed to saying this word aloud by itself, even in its sleep, instead of the other sorts of speech custom-

ary to small children. Indeed, the mother herself repeats with her child the word "*fa*-ther."¶¶

8. The idea contained in this last paragraph is also most vividly expressed by the Apostle Paul, when he says that the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities: "[F]or we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). Since we are like infants with regard to the perfection of virtue, we are unquestionably in need of the help of the Holy Spirit, so that our souls might be filled with the unspeakable sweetness that is granted by the Spirit, and so that our thoughts might be sweetened and strengthened in such a way that we will be able—with the full disposition of our souls—to arrive at constant and unceasing memory of our God and Father, offering unto Him our exclusive love.

9. This is why, as the Apostle Paul says again, we, being inspired and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, cry out "Abba, Father,"¶¶¶ whereupon our mental world comes to be regulated by the Holy Spirit, in calling God our Father.¶¶¶¶

**F. From Saint Isaac**

1. Do not compare those who call forth signs and wonders and powers in the world with those who live a life of silence in the desert and have clear knowledge of their purpose.

2. Love the inactivity of living in silence more than feeding all of the world's hungry to satiety or returning hordes of unbelievers to a knowledge of God. For it is better that you should liberate yourself from the bonds of sin than free a slave from slavery.

3. It is far better for you to have peace of soul and to enjoy harmony of body and soul than to make peace, by your teaching, between those who are at odds.¶¶¶¶¶

4. It is better that you be sparing of words, even should you have knowledge and experience,§ than let flow a river of teaching by the keen power of your mind.

5. It is more to your advantage that, through the means of the move-

ment of your thoughts and memory of the Divine, you raise your soul, deadened by sin, than it is to raise the dead.§§

6. From history, we see that many have performed astonishing miracles, have raised the dead, and have labored to return those who are erring to the straight path and the true Faith; they worked great miracles and by their efforts led many to knowledge of God. Later, however, those who gave life to others fell into base passions and put themselves to death; and they scandalized many when (from their daily behavior) their actions became known.

7. This happened because they took no care for the health of their own souls, which were sick, but instead cast themselves into the sea of the world in order to heal the souls of others, while they themselves were still ailing. And they were lost, since they did not have in their souls strong hope in God, in the aforementioned way. Their senses were still infirm and vulnerable, and, as such, they did not have the strength to deal with the flame of all those things that are wont to incite the passions, which are bridled with difficulty; nor were they able to bear temptations (brought about by the passions).

8. For these people should still have been guarding themselves; that is, they should not yet have seen women and spoken with them; they should not have enjoyed bodily rest and ease; they should not have acquired money and various things; and they should not have enjoyed honor and glory from men.

9. Censure the dissolute with the nobility of your behavior; and those who are shameless and excite the senses, censure *them* with the restraint of your gaze.

10. Cleanse your cell of everything that encourages softness, and cleanse it also of the superfluous; for this cleansing will lead you to temperance, even without your so desiring it. This is because we are not easily able to master ourselves when we have everything and live in comfort.

11. Those who have gained victory in outer warfare have taken courage and have been freed from a profound inner fear, and nothing frightens them any longer;§§§ thus, they are also strengthened in their

warfare against the passions.

12. When a person closes the city gates—that is, the gates of the senses—then, being within, he safely fights against the enemies located outside the city, and does not fear those who lie in wait within.§§§§

13. Blessed is the man who has channeled all his bodily energy into a laborious effort of ceaseless and prolonged prayer and who believes that, since he is working together with God and has cast his care upon Him day and night, he will lack nothing necessary for his subsistence, given that he has abandoned every means of livelihood for His sake.

14. If, again, one is unable to endure complete stillness without also busying himself with handicraft, then let him work; but let him use work as a means of assistance, and not so as to earn a lot of money. The reason for this is that those who have not reached perfection are helped by work in their infirmity (because it distracts them from vain and fleeting thoughts).

15. There is nothing superior and higher than for a man to fall before the Cross of Christ and to beseech Him unceasingly, day and night.

16. So overpowering is the mystical force and attraction of the Cross, that oftentimes a man finds himself—having knelt in prayer and having lifted his hands to Heaven—gazing upon the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and concentrating all of his thoughts on God. During this compunctious prayer, which is accompanied by many sighs, it so happens that a man's heart overflows with an ineffable and inexpressible delight, and from the sweetness thereof his members are paralyzed, his eyes are veiled, and he falls with his face to the ground. And from the joy and delight that captivate his heart, his thoughts and reflections are so altered that he is unable to move any part of his body or to make a prostration.§§§§§

17. Hence, be mindful to examine your thoughts and words by day and by night, and let nothing else (other than perfection, as previously described) be their object. Take heed, for if you do not struggle, you will not find, and if you do not knock, (the door of perfection) will not be opened unto you.#

18. If the outer man does not die, not only to sin, but also to every material attachment and care of life, and, correspondingly, the inner man to evil thoughts, and if the natural movement of one's body (towards cares and sin) does not abate, such that the pleasure of sin no longer moves in his heart, it will not be possible for the sweetness of the Holy Spirit to be manifested in his heart—and such a person will not experience the spiritual intoxication and that fit of folly for which the ignorant condemned the Holy Apostles.##

19. If, on the other hand, someone does not have the strength to practice this perfect work of silence, then let him attend to accomplishing the righteousness that is essential for every Christian, lest he be found outside of the two paths that lead to eternal life; that is, silence or practicing the virtues.

And let us know that without the Grace of God, it will be impossible for a man to be found within the door of salvation.###

20. Question: Please tell me, in brief, what the power of silence is.

21. Answer: Silence deadens the external senses, whereas it gives life to the inner movements of the soul and makes them thrive; it likewise brings to a standstill the unruly wandering of the mind.

22. Question: What should be the meditation and mystical occupation#### of the soul of the Hesychast in his *hesychasterion*, so that his mind will not be distracted by vain thoughts?

23. Answer: The meditation of a monk in his cell is nothing other than constant mourning and lamentation, which must possess his inner, spiritual life to such an extent that he is not at leisure to pay heed to any other thoughts. Moreover, this very habitation of his, and his isolation from other people, teach him how much his life resembles a sojourn in a tomb. This sojourn, by its very nature, keeps one living in the tomb far from the gladness of men; and the sole occupation and daily activity of the tomb-dweller is mourning. For how can he who constantly has his death—that is, his own soul, which has been put to death by sins—laid out before him, not always weep?

24. From such mourning, then, a person arrives at purity of heart; and when he has arrived at this condition, he thenceforth enjoys un-

remitting consolation of spirit. This consolation is so unceasing that the soul does not remain even an instant without enjoying its delight; and this enjoyment is so pleasurable and sweet, that tears of joy and rejoicing fill his eyes. With such tears, he is vouchsafed to reach such a lofty level when praying that, by means of the inner sight of his soul, he beholds noetic visions, which are revelations to him from the Lord. Such a Grace-filled person can no longer say even one prayer without tears streaming from his eyes. This is the meaning of the Beatitude pronounced by the Lord: "Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (St. Matthew 5:4).

25. The heron rejoices and is pleased, as naturalists tell us, only when it flies far from inhabited regions and comes to dwell alone in desert regions. The same thing happens with the soul of a monk: it receives this Heavenly Grace when the monk distances himself from people and spends his time in the compunction-evoking stillness of silence, which remains in his soul, without disturbance or fear, during the time of the soul's departure from his body.

26. The key that opens the pious heart, that it might receive Divine thoughts, is granted through showing love for one's neighbor; and to the extent that the heart is freed and liberated from the bonds of the flesh, the door of (mystical) knowledge is opened to the heart. Indeed, how beautiful and praiseworthy is love for one's neighbor, provided that the cares and concerns deriving from our love for our neighbor do not divert us from love for God!

27. How much spiritual delight the company of our spiritual brothers brings us when, together with this, we also keep noetic company with God! It is therefore good to take care of our brothers, but only so much as is fitting; that is, we must be very careful not to fall away from the mystical activity of our soul and our soul's unceasing noetic conversation with God, under the pretext of love for our neighbor. So that this mortal fall might not take place, we must communicate discretely with our brothers and keep our speech to a minimum, while leaving the majority of our time for conversation with God.

28. For he who speaks beyond measure with his brothers weakens his communication with God, since our mind is not able to speak with two simultaneously; that is, to speak at the same time with both God

and men. And while constant association with spiritual brothers is harmful, inconceivably more harmful is association with worldly people, the external sight of whom, alone, perturbs the soul of the monk.

29. Voices alone,##### even without sight, agitate and disturb the hearts of those practicing silence; and when the aimless wandering of the mind increases, then the passions of the soul are once again strengthened and, having been deadened, now come back to life. And when the passions have grown anew, they then give rise to sins, which put to death the spiritual man.

30. My brothers, this is why we must abide securely within the doors of our cells, that we might not know the evils of men. We will then reckon them all saintly and good, for our minds will be ignorant of their wickedness. If, however, we become critics and censurers of other people, avengers of the wrongs done to us by them, and fault-finders, in what way does our retreat differ from life in the city, with all of its disturbances?

*A Roman mile was equal to 100 steps, which is eight *stadia;* that is, approximately 1500 meters.

** The great Arsenios was a Roman by birth, extremely well-educated in every science and philosophy of his age. Before becoming a monk, he was appointed by Theodosios the Great as tutor to his sons, the future Emperors Arcadius and Honorius. He then settled in Constantinople, from which he departed for the desert (see his Life in the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church,* Vol. V, 1st ed., pp. 187-204; 2nd ed., pp. 199-216.)

*** For Rhaïthou see endnotes for Hypothesis XXXII, Book I. Klysma is a city in Egypt on the Gulf of Arabia—*Editors.*

**** A high-level state official.

***** Elias represents the model of the anchorite and Moses the model of the caretaker and guardian of souls.

• The passage that he interprets allegorically is from IV Kings 4:8-17. The analogy is as follows: Just as the Shunammite woman, though barren, was still able to conceive and give birth through the miraculous prayers of the Prophet, since he was prudent and virtuous, so also the soul of the monk living in silence, above bodily weaknesses, receives the visitation of the Holy Spirit and is thenceforth enriched with many spiritual gifts, among which is lofty and mystagogic *θεωρία.*

•• Secret meditation, here, evidently means either the occupation of the mind with lofty visions that surmount the laws of nature and the mystical understanding, thereby, of transcendental truths, or the study of Holy Scripture and its allegorical interpretation.

••• The example of the dove is apt; for the dove, however far it may distance itself from its nest, always returns to it. This is why, as is well known, the dove [or pigeon, a type of which the dove is—*Trans.*] is used as a messenger. It also must be kept in mind that, in the region in question, there were many wild birds which, by reason of nature,

pursued the doves when the latter were exposed in the open air.

•••• Here, again, and wherever the word "silence" (*hesychia*) is encountered, it has the specific meaning of rigorous concentration and focus, so that the monk, being far from the world, might think exclusively of God alone and communicate with Him noetically. The particular teaching on this subject and the system fashioned upon it is called "Hesychasm."

••••• Let us recall, in order to understand with greater depth the spirit of the anchorite's noble endeavor, the words of the Apostle Paul: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20).

† "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready" (Psalm 56:8).

†† The states described by the anchorites do not constitute images of a lively imagination, but rather voluntary restraint and guidance of the mind in meditation upon supernatural truths and the repelling of evil and soul-destroying thoughts in general. Such states also frequently include instances of ecstasy and intense and moving experiences of the meeting of the soul with the Divine, in a way that transcends the material world and reality, similar to the experience to which the Apostle Paul admits, in reference to his passage into the third heaven (II Corinthians 12:1-4).

††† With his denial, he evidently aimed at surmounting the weakness deriving from natural affection for one's relatives.

†††† "Amma": i.e., "Mother" or "Eldress." [See the Glossary at the back of this volume—*Trans.*]

††††† "Cord": the twisted and braided offshoots of palm trees, which are intermeshed and woven to form baskets.

‡ Abba Theodore's behavior, which is characteristic of the Hesychastic spirit, is not due to a lack of love, especially since, for love's sake, he received the student on the previous day and gave him to eat. But the Saint, desiring to keep his mind pure and free from every care, would avoid every kind of distraction.

‡‡ A true and unambiguous distillation of experience: a person can suffer self-confinement when he has consolation, either from the transient world or from God. But he who has nothing inside him is unsettled and can find rest nowhere.

‡‡‡ "Silence in every circumstance," or "timely silence," should be understood in contrast to "untimely speech" or, more generally, as a continuous effort to concentrate one's mental powers and a consequent systematic avoidance of all speech that destroys concentration.

‡‡‡‡ Let us recall that Church hymnography characterizes the Prophet Elias as an "Angel in the flesh."

‡‡‡‡‡ "...For Whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Philippians 3:8).

◊ The view here expressed by Abba Isaiah, in comparison with his previous one, has the following meaning: Even when the Hesychast is liberated from personal causes of passion, which usually arise from cares held out of love for his brother, he henceforth continues to be in danger on account of the influence of the demons, which invisibly move through the air [which are "ethereal" or in the spiritual realm—*Trans.*].

◊◊ This edifying advice does not concern Hesychasts alone, but all people. Harmful and destructive conversations predispose the human soul to evil, which is why the Apostle Paul says: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (I Corinthians 15:33).

◊◊◊ With such apt characterizations, these ascetics wish to stress the need for self-

confinement, vigilance over one's thoughts, and the successful repelling of these evils.

◊◊◊◊ A listless mind, as mentioned in the text, is an uncaring one; that is, it attends to nothing, is slothful, negligent, and indifferent. The Fathers call this passion "listlessness" (*ἀκηδία*), and it is numbered among the mortal sins. The ascetic Fathers characterize listlessness as the most harmful and gravest passion, given that it affects all of the powers of the soul and causes sleep, which in turn brings about death [Ammonios on St. Matthew 24 in *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXXXV, col. 1385B, and Theodoretos on Psalm 118:28 in *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXXX, cols. 1829D-1832A—*Trans.*]. Evagrios [*Φιλοκαλία*, Vol. I, pp. 50-51—*Trans.*], Sts. Neilos, John of the Ladder [Ladder, Step XIII—*Trans.*], Antiochos [Homily XXVI, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXXXIX, cols. 1513D-1520A—*Trans.*], Cassian [*Φιλοκαλία*, Vol. I, pp. 76-78—*Trans.*], John of Damascus [*Sacra Parallela*, ch. 33, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XCV, cols. 1209C-1212B—*Trans.*], Theodore the Studite, and many others also wrote on listlessness.

◊◊◊◊◊ "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (St. Matthew 13:45).

¶ Sense, desire, memory: three faculties of the mind which have an interrelation and mutual connection. Through the faculty of sense, the mind envisages; through the faculty of desire, it desires the thing envisaged and inclines towards it; and through the faculty of memory, it retains it and holds it captive, as a precious philter and object of Divine love of the soul. The moderation or temporary incapacitation of one's inner sense, owing to the passions, also paralyzes the functioning of the other two faculties.

¶¶ In this expressive example, the mind is characterized as a child of the soul (autonomously), thereby preserving the unity of the mental life with its causative dependence on God.

¶¶¶ "The Spirit...in your hearts, crying 'Abba, Father'" (Galatians 4:6).

¶¶¶¶ It is noteworthy that the soul's elevation to a level in which it vibrates with love for God and is stirred by the experience of the Fatherhood of God is a consequence of the action of the Holy Spirit. A precondition for this wondrous action, however, is the purification of the mind.

¶¶¶¶¶ Great is the reward of the peacemakers, concerning whom the Lord said: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (St. Matthew 5:9). More blessed than these, however, are those who have first made peace within themselves; for, if a person does not obtain peace, he is not able to transmit it to others.

§ "Knowledge and experience" signify mystical knowledge by means of vision and an inner experience brought about by *θεωρία*.

§§ The meaning, here, is that resurrection from one's passions is preferable even to the raising of the dead: "Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not...in Thy Name done many wonderful works?' And then will I profess unto them, 'I never knew you'" (St. Matthew 7:22-23). It is, moreover, possible that Abba Isaac is alluding to Origen's teaching of the restoration of all things and is censuring his erudition and great keenness of thought, through which he fell into heresy, and contrasting it with the value of mystical knowledge and inner experience.

§§§ The ascetic, here, means the liberation from the outer causes of temptations, concerning which he just previously spoke.

§§§§ The outer enemies are all of those factors that lead to sin, such as money, which gives rise to avarice; and the enemies lying in wait are sinful thoughts.

§§§§§ This is, of course, not a state of infirmity, such as a fainting fit; for this per-

son (who is Abba Isaac himself, describing his inner experience in the third person) is conscious of the lofty and Divine feelings that have taken possession of his heart. The *Troparion* "Thou hast captivated me with longing, O Christ, and by Thy Divine love hast Thou changed me" (Canon 2 of the Transfiguration, Ode 9) refers to this condition, as also does the confession of those who had walked to Emmaus with Jesus: "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" (St. Luke 24:32).

# "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (St. Matthew 7:7).

## "We are fools for Christ's sake" (I Corinthians 4:10).

### The Grace of God, however, blesses either silence or the virtuous life and is not granted unrestrainedly or misguidedly.

#### With the words "mystical occupation," we are rendering the word *ἀδολεσχία*, the primary meaning of which is the activity of speech. But perhaps the one who is so mystically occupied also speaks, by groans that cannot be uttered, with God, Whom he contemplates abiding in his heart.

##### He does not mean only worldly noises, but also didactic voices, bellowing psalmody, and pious loquacities, which may delight the ears and give rise to an elusive emotion, without, however, bringing about the desired change, of which the ultimate and primary goal is mystical vision.

## Hypothesis VI

*In what way and from whence one derives strength to gain victory over one's thoughts, and to what extent we are not responsible for the thoughts that come to us.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Isaiah asked Abba Poimen to instruct him regarding unclean thoughts.

Abba Poimen responded:

"Do not be anxious about unclean thoughts. Consider a basket full of wet clothes.* If we leave the clothes in the basket for a long time, they will surely rot; the same will happen with our thoughts. If we do not put them into action, they will disappear by themselves in the course of time."

2. The same Abba Poimen, when asked by Abba Joseph about unclean thoughts, said:

"Just as, were someone to put a snake and a scorpion in a container and seal it well, they would both unfailingly die with time, so also evil thoughts arising from demonic activity cool down and disappear by means of patience."

3. Another brother once visited Abba Poimen and asked him:

"My Father, is it possible for a man to keep all of his thoughts in check and not to yield any of them to the Enemy?"

To this question, Abba Poimen responded:

"It is possible for there to be a person who receives ten, yet yields the Enemy one."**

4. Another brother visiting Abba Poimen asked him:

"My Father, how will I defend myself against the influence of thoughts?"

Abba Poimen replied:

"A person may have fire to his right and a vessel of water to his left. So, when the fire gains strength, let him take water from the vessel to ex-

tinguish it. By the fire," continued Abba Poimen, "I mean the seed of the Enemy, that is, a shameful thought; by the water, I mean the capability of throwing ourselves before God and seeking His help."

5. A monk asked Abba Sisoes:
"Why, Father, do the passions not leave me?"
Abba Sisoes replied:
"How can they leave, since their implements are in your heart? Return what they have deposited with you in advance, and they will then assuredly depart."***

6. Another time, Abba Joseph questioned the same Elder, saying:
"My Father, please tell me: How quickly ought a person to cut off his passions?"
Abba Sisoes: You would like to learn the length of time?
Abba Joseph: Yes.
Abba Sisoes: The very moment you perceive the action of a passion, you must immediately eradicate it and not allow it to linger.

7. Some brothers once visited Abba Joseph at the Enaton Monastery and, apart from other things, asked him:
"Is the soul harmed when it accepts communion with an evil thought?"
To this, the Elder replied:
"Since the soul is benefited by pure and pious thoughts, it follows that it will also be harmed by shameful and evil thoughts—if the soul occupies itself with them for a long time."

8. A brother said to an Elder:
"My Father, I see no warfare in my heart."
And the Elder replied thoughtfully:
"You resemble a fortress that has four doors, all open; whoever so wishes, then, enters and exits your soul without difficulty. You are not aware of this. But if you place a door at the entrance of your soul that closes securely and does not permit evil thoughts to enter therein, you will then see that these evil thoughts will stand outside the door and will war against you."

9. The older Elders said to the younger:
"We must never yield places to thoughts within the stronghold of

our souls, so as to remain there even if briefly."

Another time, they said:

"To any thought whatsoever that arises in your mind, say: 'Halt! Are you one of ours, or do you come from the enemy camp?' And the thought, carefully examined, will without fail reveal its origin."

10. A brother asked an ascetic Father:

"My Father, what am I to do, for the thoughts that war against me are many, and I do not know how to defend myself against their attacks?"

The Elder replied:

"My child, do not war against all of them together, but against just one—the chief one. All of the thoughts that bother monks have one common head, a commander on whom they are dependent. We must, then, learn who this commander is and fight against him with vehemence, whereupon, when he has been vanquished, the remaining thoughts are humbled together with him."****

11. An Elder said the following things concerning thoughts:

"The mere entry of thoughts into our minds is not reprehensible. Reprehensible is the misuse of thoughts. It is possible for a soul to be spiritually shipwrecked by thoughts, just as it is possible for it to be crowned as victor (against them)."*****

With this opinion, the holy Elder teaches us that we are able to quash a bad thought by opposing it, or even to transform bad thoughts into good ones, having been given this opportunity by the assaulting thoughts themselves.

12. Abba Theodore, who lived in Sketis, said to his disciples: "A thought comes, bothers me, and preoccupies me; and though I do not commit the action it suggests to me, it still hinders me in my effort to practice virtue. This is precisely where watchful or vigilant attention has its place. The vigilant man shakes off all of these thoughts from himself and rises with determination to pray."

13. Abba John the Short would characteristically say: "In my effort to repel bad thoughts, I resemble a person who sits under a great tree and watches in anguish as many wild beasts and reptiles come at him. When unable to confront these things, this man immediately runs, clambers up a tree, and is saved. Precisely the same thing happens with me:

I sit in my cell and observe the evil thoughts attacking me; and when I reach the point of no longer being able to cope with their attacks, I then turn in prayer to God, and am securely delivered from these evil thoughts."

14. A discerning ascetic Elder, while advising a brother, said to him:

"The Devil is the enemy and your soul is the abode that he seeks to defile. The Enemy, then, does not cease throwing within the abode of your soul whatever he can come up with, littering it with every sort of filth. But you are responsible if you grow negligent and do not throw out the filth littered in your soul by the Devil. If you do not immediately attend to accomplishing this work of cleansing, then the inner abode of your soul will be filled with every kind of filth and no one will be able to enter and abide therein, on account of the unbearable stench. If, however, you straightaway resolve to take out the first batch of filth the Devil throws in, then God, rewarding your intention, will preserve the inner abode of your soul in cleanliness by His Grace."

15. The ancient ascetic Fathers were wont to recount the following incident: "On the mountain of Abba Anthony, seven monks lived in asceticism. When the palm trees were ripe with fruit, ready for harvesting, the Fathers would take turns guarding them, in order to drive away the birds, until they had collected the fruit. Since the brothers were seven in number, they would each stand guard one day a week. When it was the eldest brother's day to stand guard, he would cry out: 'Flee far from me, both of you: The evil thoughts inside of me and the birds.'"

16. An Elder skilled in instruction expressed the following edifying opinion: "However long you proffer strands of material to Satan, he will weave ropes; for he is a rope-weaver." He meant by this one's thoughts: the more you pay attention to them—that is, accept them—the more they will multiply and tie themselves to you.

17. A brother asked an Elder:

"My Father, how should the mind banish evil and unclean thoughts?"

And the Elder replied:

"My child, it is not possible for the mind, entirely on its own, to accomplish such a thing, because it does not have that much power. When evil thoughts assault the soul, the soul must immediately take refuge in

its Creator, persistently entreating Him to come unto its aid, whereupon He dissolves them straightaway, as wax is melted by fire."

18. Abba Poimen once visited Abba Joseph and asked him:

"My Father, what should I do when passions [i.e., thoughts—*Trans.*] come to me? Should I resist and not allow them any entrance into my soul, or should I permit them to enter?"

The Elder, having given this some thought, replied:

"Allow them to enter your mind, and then war against them."

Indeed, Abba Poimen returned to Sketis, following Abba Joseph's advice.

19. By coincidence, a short while later, one of the monks from the Thebaid went to Sketis and, apart from other things, recounted to the brothers the following: "These last days, I visited Abba Joseph and asked him what to do when I am disturbed by an impassioned thought: 'Should I resist, or should I allow it entrance into my mind?' Abba Joseph answered: 'Do not allow impassioned thoughts to enter you at all; instead, immediately block them and eradicate them.'"

20. As soon as he heard this account from the monk of the Thebaid, Abba Poimen immediately went to Panepho• and, meeting up with Abba Joseph, said to him:

"My Father, I entrusted my thoughts to you; but you gave me different advice than you gave a monk from the Thebaid on the same matter."

Abba Joseph asked him:

"Do you know how much I love you?"

"Certainly, I know," answered Abba Poimen.

Abba Joseph asked him again:

"Did you not ask me to give you the advice that I would have given myself?"

Abba Poimen affirmed this, saying:

"Just as you say."

21. And Abba Joseph continued:

"Consequently, I gave you the advice that I would consider proper for myself. And indeed, if impassioned thoughts enter your soul and you war against them, you will surely prove to be more than equal to such a trial. I repeat: I spoke to you as I would have spoken to myself.

Now, of course, there are some, spiritually infirm, for whom it is not profitable that impassioned thoughts should assail them, even from a distance; rather, it is necessary that they cut them off and dismiss them without delay."

***From Father Paul Evergetinos***

And so we, too, my friends, being infirm, must immediately, by the power of prayer, banish the impassioned thoughts that come to us; but, again, if someone has the strength, let him war against them with reasonable and careful retorts.

***From the Redactor (St. Nikodemos)***

The profounder meaning of this valuable advice is as follows: Impassioned thoughts constitute a harmless attack, when they are repelled or contradicted in the mental realm (the ideal condition), or when they are banished far from the mental realm through prayer (the condition of the infirm).

**B. From Saint Ephraim**

1. My brother, know that as long as we are in this life, we must pass through many snares; thus, we should always take heed lest we fall into a deadly trap. And there is constant fear that we fall into these traps of the Evil One, since they are cloaked by deceptive sweetness, such that the soul is not able to perceive the spiritual death lying in wait. These things, then, are constantly hidden from our souls by the Devil, that he might ensnare and bring them to ruin in eternal punishment. For it is terribly harmful and dangerous when our soul's disposition to resist is paralyzed, owing to our desire to examine with pleasure the evil thoughts that bother us and to allow them entrance into our souls.

2. Hence, beware lest we be made languid by the seducing sweetness of the snares of death and be beguiled into careful attention to our evil thoughts. For we should know that if an evil thought manages to enter our soul, it then sweetens the sense of the soul with this evil contemplation; and, since it has not been banished by persistent prayer•• and fervent tears, it proves to be a deadly snare for such a soul.•••

3. We must not, however, become languid and paralyzed, sweetened by the contemplation of evil thoughts, on account of our soul's propensity and inclination for pleasure; on the contrary, when we recognize such a propensity, let us always take refuge in God and entreat Him, with persistent prayer, sighs, and fervent tears, to free us from the offenses and snares of the Evil One.

4. Moreover, my brother, do not be frightened and debilitated by the thoughts that assault you; for this is the beginning of the struggle.

You will better understand the meaning of my advice if you consider a pit filled with rain water. Now, when it rains, as you will have noticed, and the pit fills with the blessed rain water, at first the water is muddy; but as more time passes, it becomes clearer. In the same way, my beloved, do not be frightened by thoughts.

5. Indeed, it has also been written in Holy Scripture on this subject: "[A]nd the floods of iniquity sore troubled me" (Psalm 17:5), and "Our God is our refuge and strength, a help in the afflictions that come heavily upon us" (Psalm 45:2-3); that is, "God is our refuge and strength, a help in the afflictions that come heavily upon us. Therefore shall we not fear when the earth be troubled."

6. Thus, when your mind is disturbed by an evil thought, call out with tears and all of the strength of your soul to God, saying: "Lord, take compassion on me, a sinner, and banish evil far from me, abolishing its power against me." God is a knower of hearts and, as such, He knows which of our innermost thoughts come from our own voluntary and wicked way of thought (whereupon we are responsible), and which are introduced into our souls, against our will, by the malice of the demons (whereupon we are not responsible, as long as we do not give ourselves over to them).

7. And know this: insofar as you struggle and persist in working for the Lord, your mind will become purer, and so will your thoughts. This is supported by the Lord's words: "Every branch in my vineyard that does not bear fruit, I will cut away; and every branch that bears fruit, I will purge, that it may bring forth more fruit."••••

It is sufficient merely to desire the salvation of your soul with sincerity; for the Lord, as a mighty co-worker, helps all those who anxiously seek the salvation of their souls.

8. Listen, now, to another parable concerning evil thoughts. New wine, freshly collected from the wine press and poured into earthenware jars, so greatly ferments during the first few days, that it is as if it were burning over an intense flame; indeed, some jars cannot endure the vehemence of the fermentation and shatter. Later, however, when the fermentation has finished and the must has been changed into wine, then the wine remains motionless in the jars or barrels and is purified.

9. Precisely the same thing happens with man. When he resolves to abandon his vain way of life, filled with everyday worldly cares, and to work for God, submitting himself and being distressed for the sake of the Lord, then the demons, envying the man's soul-saving decision, disturb his intellect in sundry ways, confusing him with muddled thoughts that preëmpt his resolution, such that, finding such a fragile vessel, they shatter it—and this fragile vessel is the hesitant soul of little faith. When, however, this person stands firm in his faith, then the thoughts gradually begin to quieten, and thus his heart grows calm; and once it has been rendered perfectly pure, it henceforth manifestly receives the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit.

10. Moreover, the demons resemble ravening wolves, which gather around the cells of monastics and seek a door open to them, so as to jump inside and tear to pieces the soul that submits to them. But when they encounter a door that has been closed in their face, then, breathing wrath and fury, they depart without being able to do any evil. By the closed door, I mean the soul that has been founded on faith and which vigilantly guards the senses (lest there enter therein unseemly images, which give rise to wicked thoughts).

11. Hence, do not lose heart and do not fear the villainy of the demons. They are not able to harm you, unless you hand yourself over to them. Christ is your helper, Who said: "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the Enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (St. Luke 10:19).

Thus, my beloved, be manful and strengthened with God's help; for His mercy is ever-present for those who love Him.•••••

**C. From St. Isaiah**

1. Three are the passions that dominate the soul, until it reaches a

high measure of perfection. And these three passions, which do not allow the mind to remain concentrated on a continuous struggle for the acquisition of the virtues, are: captivity of the mind by sensuous and impassioned thoughts, sloth, and forgetfulness or lethe. Of these three passions, the most fearsome is forgetfulness,† because forgetfulness wars against man as long as he lives and brings him great agony.

Forgetfulness is a passion mightier than all of the thoughts that war against man; it gives birth to all wickedness and demolishes at every hour whatever a man has managed to build up with labor.

2. The same Abba Isaiah said: "If you sit in your cell and make your petition to God in silence and with concentration, and your heart chances to attend to something that is not of God (but rather worldly, temporal, and mortal), and you occupy your thought with it, beware: Do not say that this activity is not a sin, but just a matter of simple notions! If such a thought forms itself in your soul and you consent to this deviation of the mind, then the petition you offer to God is not genuine and sincere. If you maintain that God accepts that petition of your heart, offered to Him in compunctious silence, then, by consequence, the consent of your heart to wickedness—which was also accomplished in silence (without visible manifestation)—and the time spent in this silent consent of your heart result in this silence being counted as sin in the eyes of God."††

**D. From Abba Mark**

1. There are those who ask: Given that, by means of Holy Baptism, sin ceases to exist in our souls, why, then, does it act in our hearts even after Baptism? To this question, we answer: Sin does not act in us after Holy Baptism of its own accord, as if having power of its own to act against us even after it has been expunged, but rather because we continue to love it and to neglect the commandments of God on its account.

2. That is, while Holy Baptism grants perfect deliverance from sin, the regenerated man's resumption of sin through his attachment to evil, or the preservation of his deliverance from sin through keeping the commandments, depends solely on his free will. When our thought dwells for a long time on some pleasure or anger, this is proof of an attachment that comes from man's free will and not evidence of a remnant of unexpunged sin after Holy Baptism; for we have power to expel thoughts

from our mind and to demolish every obstacle that is raised in order to impede us from knowledge of God, as Holy Scripture says.†††

3. Thus, for those who annihilate it in their intellect, an evil thought is a sign of love for God and not a sign of sin. For the simple irruption of a thought is not a sin, but only the consent of our mind to that thought is sinful. If we truly and sincerely do not love the thought that has attacked our soul, then why do we dwell on it so long?

It is impossible for something that we hate with our whole heart to prolong its presence in our heart; this lingering is due to our voluntary personal disposition to do what is bad.

4. You have, then, the power and the weapons to conquer the thoughts that attack your heart and mind. Here is what Holy Scripture says on the subject: "For the weapons of our spiritual warfare against evil are not carnal, but have the power from God to pull down strongholds and thoughts" (*cf.* II Corinthians 10:4-5).

But if, while having at your disposal such an effectively powerful arsenal against them, you do not destroy evil thoughts as soon as they assail your mind, then you show that it is from a lack of faith that you love the pleasure of these thoughts and keep company with them; in this case, *you*, not some remnant of ancestral sin, are responsible for this sinful activity.

**Question**

5. Please tell me, how can it be that one who has voluntarily enclosed himself in his cell, fasts daily, practices temperance and poverty, conducts himself as a stranger to this world, keeps vigil every night, sleeps on the ground, and prays unceasingly, should love pleasure and pay attention to evil thoughts out of a lack of faith? Tell me, indeed, how is it possible for one who voluntarily bears such afflictions for the love of Christ to experience sensuous thoughts and be bothered by base thinking?

**Answer**

6. You are correct in saying that a person who sorrowfully performs the works you describe is bothered by sensuous thoughts; for if we practiced these manifest virtues without mental oppression, but instead with

joy and out of love for spiritual labors, it would not be possible for sensuality to occupy our mind. You must also know that it is impossible for a person who suffers on account of bodily labors *not* to consent, correspondingly, to the onslaught of thoughts and to soothe thereby the bitterness he experiences from such labors. For if such a person did not desire these thoughts deep within, he would assuredly not be grieved by laboring for the accomplishment of ascetic virtues. We are wearied by our labors in fulfilling ascetic duties and, in general, by our efforts for the sake of virtue because we do not rack ourselves, physically, out of a desire to enjoy future good things, but rather out of our fear of temptations that befall us in the present life.††††

7. Precisely for this reason, then, we think that an evil act is our own sin, whereas the thought that inspired this act we reckon an unknown energy. Those who do not consider this energy of thoughts to be their own are unable to avert thoughts. In fact, it is possible for an abhorrent thought to bother us without our having consented to it in some way, or even without any mingling of our mind with it; and this thought may provoke our enmity, just as if a thief were unexpectedly to appear before us. This thieving thought takes our mind, as if by force, and holds it captive.

8. Despite all of this, however, I would have you know that even the thought entering our mind so unexpectedly, like a thief who suddenly appears, still has its underlying causes in our soul: Either we have given ourselves over, after Baptism, to an evil thought and put it into practice, or else we have voluntarily preserved some seeds of evil in our souls. This is why the Evil One finds a place in our souls and entrenches himself therein.

9. And while the thought that has temporarily taken control of us, owing to the seeds of evil within us, will thereafter only depart from us when we have rejected these seeds, the thought that remains in us on account of an evil act that we have committed will only be put to flight when we offer to God worthy fruits of repentance. And it is put to flight because God dispels it, having been implored by almsgiving, prayer, and the patience we must show in the evils we suffer. This is why I say that this sin is not due to the energy of the ancestral sin of Adam, but is rather the personal sin of the one who has committed an evil after Holy Baptism or who voluntarily holds on to the seeds of evil.

10. If, again, you object that the sensual thought came before both of the causes we have specified—i.e., the evil act and the seed of evil—and you wish me to tell you what, then, is the reason for this thought, I reply to you thusly: You, yourself, are the reason, for you had all of the power needed to repulse the thought as soon as it attacked you, yet you did not do so, allowing it, rather, to accompany you until you performed the evil act it suggested to you. If you do not have the strength, on account of the infirmities of your mind, utterly to vanquish a thought before acting, how can you now promise to eradicate it *after* the act of sin, when it has already become entrenched in you through your infirmities, and holds you by force?

11. But again, if you confess that, with God's help, you will eradicate the evil thought, then know that even before you commit an act suggested to you by an evil thought, God will help you, if you so desire and ask this of Him. When, finally, you perceive in your heart the help of God generated within you, then you will surely understand that this Grace has not come to you from without, driven by some source, but that it has been given to you, in a way unverifiable by reason, through Holy Baptism. In this particular case, it acts in you to the same degree that you distance yourself from a thought; that is to say, the manifestation of Divine aid in you is in proportion to your hatred for, and repulsion by, an evil thought.

12. Precisely for this reason, our Lord Jesus Christ, having delivered us from every coercion and constraint, did not hinder the vexation of the heart by thoughts—such that some of the thoughts vanish immediately, being hated by the heart, whereas others, cherished by it, remain therein, to the extent that the heart's love for them persists and remains—so as to bear witness, thereby, to both the Grace of Christ and the will of man; that is, to reveal whether a person loves labors for the sake of enjoying Grace, or whether he prefers his thoughts for the sake of enjoying pleasure.

13. Let us not find it strange if both cherished and hated thoughts act with vehemence and violence in our hearts; for the onslaughts of thoughts against the heart work together with our desires, like wicked kinsmen. Thus, each desire, having coordinated its assault on our heart with other desires, hands over our thought to the desire that follows it, so that it is thus lured on by this second desire to evil thoughts, even

against its will, and in this way is now necessarily drawn along by the first desire, out of habit.

14. Let us look at this in actual practice: Who, for example, having been puffed up by vainglory, is able to avoid pride? Or who, having slept his fill and enjoyed comfort, will not be captivated by thoughts of fornication? Or who, having been overcome by greed, is not conquered by mercilessness? Finally, how is it possible for all those who are deprived of such things against their will not to become angry and wrathful?

15. This is why we must understand that we are culpable when tempted by these sins; for we have been freed from compulsory slavery, according to what has been written: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2).

16. Consequently, it is completely within our power—we who have heard and learned the commandments of the Spirit—either to walk according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. We must know, however, that those who love the praise of men and desire the comforts of the flesh are unable to walk as spiritual people; and it is inconceivable that those who wholeheartedly prefer the future good things to present, transient things should live according to the flesh.

17. Hence, we who long enough labored under a delusion must despise the praise of men and comforts of the flesh; for, by means of these things, evil thoughts spring up (in our minds), even against our will. And we must, in all purity of spirit, address the Lord with the words of the Prophet: "Have I not hated them, O Lord, that hate Thee? and have I not pined away because of Thine enemies? I have hated them with a perfect hatred, and they are counted my enemies" (Psalm 138:21-22).

18. The evil thoughts that hinder the accomplishment of the Will of God are indeed enemies of God, inasmuch as God desires that all men be saved and come to knowledge of the truth, as the Apostle Paul assures us, saying: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I St. Timothy 2:4). Such evil thoughts, however, entice us here and there, through our attachment to them, and hinder our salvation.

19. Thus, when we utterly despise these evil thoughts and entrust all of our concerns to the Lord, turning our every thought to Him with a fervent hope that exclusively dominates our mind, then, just as at the beginning of belief [in God—*Trans.*], implanted in us through Holy Baptism, the Body of Christ became the believer's nourishment, so also the mind that is firm in faith and pure, through noetic hope and the renunciation of evil thoughts, shall become that nourishment of Jesus, Who said: "My food is to do the will of Him that sent me" (St. John 4:34).

20. What is the will of the Heavenly Father?

It is that all men be saved and come to knowledge of the truth, as the Apostle Paul says! [I St. Timothy 2:4; see section 18, *supra—Trans.*].

This truth, about which the Apostle Paul speaks, is found (by the mind) according to the measure of noetic hope, by the energy of the Holy Spirit (in us); and this truth is the substance of things hoped for.†††††

21. This truth cannot be accepted by the mind of the unbaptized or heretics; for this truth, as an attribute of the energy of the Holy Spirit, is first given to the faithful in a mystical way through Holy Baptism and remains in the believer—though in a veiled form; this veiled truth is then gradually uncovered‡ to the believer, in proportion to his practice of the commandments and his noetic hope. This is based on the words of the Lord, Who said: "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (St. John 7:38). As we know, "this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive" (St. John 7:39).

22. And this also we must know: We did not inherit the lapse of Adam in and of itself, and this because Adam himself lapsed not of necessity, but by his free and unforced will. Death, however, which proceeded from the *Lapsus* and which is, in essence, eternal estrangement of man from God, we have necessarily inherited, since death of necessity also captivated Adam. Thus, since the first man died—that is, was eternally estranged from God—we have not been able to live in God either: "[N]evertheless death reigned...even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (Romans 5:14).‡‡ This is why the Lord came: to give us new life by the font of regeneration (that is, Holy Baptism), and to reconcile us with God, which He did.

23. In the case of our forefather Adam, then, three events have come together: a) by *oikonomia*, the temptation of Adam (by the Devil); b) the transgression of the commandment of God by Adam, owing to his lack of faith in God; and c) the resulting death of the first-created, according to the just judgment of God.

The resulting death was not caused by the temptation, by *oikonomia*, of Adam and Eve, but rather by their transgression of the Divine will through their lack of faith.

Hence, as I said, we have inherited only death; for, being dead, we could not come to life until the Lord came and gave life to all who believed in Him.

24. We possess the first mental condition and simplicity of Adam, according to the dispensation of God. The very fact that there are people who possess the simplicity of mind of the first-created is evidence of "those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (Romans 5:14); and though necessarily subject to the onslaught of the thought, like him (inasmuch as the thought did not derive from their own will), nevertheless they wholly avoid communion with the thought and, in general, any endeavor to acquiesce to it and to the perpetration of the evils that it proposes.

25. The attack, then, of Satan is a simple and brief appearance in our mind of an evil thing; but this simple and fleeting appearance, this suggestion, comes into our mind solely on account of our lack of faith.

And behold how favorable conditions are created for the activity of Satan's assaults against us. As we know, we have received the commandment from Christ our Savior to be anxious about nothing,‡‡‡ but rather vigilantly to guard our hearts and to seek the Kingdom of Heaven which is within us.‡‡‡‡ But when our mind deviates from the aforementioned surveillance of the heart and the pursuit of the Kingdom of God, it immediately gives room to the Devil's suggestion, and our mind becomes receptive to the evil thoughts that he insinuates.

26. But even then, the Devil does not have power to put our thoughts into action. Woe to us, if such were the case; for he would not spare us, but would force us always to have in mind all manner of evil thoughts and imaginings, and would never permit us to think anything good.

The only power he has is to insinuate evil things into our minds,

simply and under the cover of innocence, in order to test, through temptation, where our inner disposition inclines: towards submission to him or towards the commandment of the Lord. These two states are always contending with each other.

27. For this reason, we immediately turn our thoughts to the object presented to us by the Devil—insofar as it touches upon things that we like, of course—whereupon we passionately enter into mental intercourse and communion with the intimated thing. When, on the other hand, the thing intimated by the Devil touches upon things that we hate, then we will not abide the intimation for even a moment, indeed despising even the very suggestion of it. And if the suggestion continues to remain in our mind, despite our aversion—because this can happen—this is not due to our current mental disposition, but arises, rather, because such a suggestion must have become entrenched in a past possession of our soul by a similar thought.

28. For precisely this reason, the hated thought remains—immovable at the point of attack and unable to progress—a simple thought, impeded by the repulsion of the heart from developing or evolving into a (sinful) cluster of thoughts or a passion. This is because the simple and fleeting impression provoked by the appearance of a thought—especially when it is despised by one keeping vigilant watch over himself—is by nature unable to drag down the mind and throw it into a passion or a sinful cluster of thoughts; only sensuality of the heart is able to contribute to this degradation.

29. Thus, if we utterly avoid every sensuality, not even the simple appearance in our intellect of predispositions (previous depictions in the mind that remain in the state of impressions, owing to the involuntary remembrance of past evils) is able to harm us, though such a movement of thoughts in the mind may reprove our conscience as regards the assurance of future (good things).‡‡‡‡‡

30. As soon, however, as the mind discerns the vain contradiction within itself from the involuntary remembrance of a previous evil thought or action, and immediately hastens to confess this past sin to God, this temptation is straightaway reduced to nothing, and the mind regains its power to watch over the heart and, through prayer, vigilantly to guard it, indeed endeavoring to enter into its most profound and im-

penetrable places.

31. The winds of evil thoughts do not blow there, violently driving the soul and body to the precipices of sensuality; nor does any wide and spacious road open up, strewn with words and notions of worldly wisdom and seducing those who follow it, even if they are prudent and careful. For the pure and innermost dwellings of the soul [of the heart—*Trans.*] and the abode [therein] of Christ—into which abode Christ entered, for our sakes, by way of Holy Baptism, as a Forerunner (of our salvation)—receive within them only a pure mind bearing with it none of the elements of this age, whether these elements be rational or irrational, except for the three radiant virtues cited by the Apostle, which are faith, hope, and love: "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (I Corinthians 13:13).

32. Hence, it is possible for one who is a friend of truth and desires that his heart be sanctified (and find respite) not to be disturbed by recollections of former evils (and not be provoked by indecent thoughts), but to keep watch over the movements of his heart, to proceed to its innermost parts, and to approach God, that he might not feel aversion and abhorrence at the labors he undergoes for the sake of achieving heightened carefulness and perseverance (in a state of constant spiritual concentration). For a person who carefully examines the movements of his heart cannot but experience pain of heart, when he daily turns over in his mind recollections of proud ostentation and carnal pleasures, which are evoked in him not only from the outside, but also from within, as memories in his soul, with which he often consorted not only in thought but also in practice.

**Question**

33. Why then am I, who, being baptized in the Name of the Lord, beseech God, seek His Grace, and desire, with all my volition, to shield and free myself from evil thoughts, unable to do so? Especially since the Lord explicitly promised, as it is said in the Holy Gospel, that He would help those who cry out to Him day and night, calling upon His mercy?◊

**Answer**

34. The Lord said that He would help not those who voluntarily re-

main in sensuality, but rather those who are warred against, on their own, by involuntary recollections of their former evils. This is why He promised to defend the latter, as having been injured by the Enemy. Conversely, He condemns those who remain in sensuality because they reject His commandments, saying: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven" (St. Matthew 7:21). He then likens them to a foolish man who built his house upon the sand of his own will (St. Matthew 7:26).

35. So, learn precisely, O man, that the Lord keeps watch over the hearts of all men; and those who immediately despise the first thought inspired in them by evil recollections does He encircle, without delay, with His protection, working vengeance on their noetic enemies (i.e., their thoughts), as He promised. He does not allow the swarm of divers sensual and sinful thoughts to rise up and pollute their minds and consciences.

36. The others, however, who do not immediately reject the first dubious whisperings and the first questionable instigations of the Evil One with faith and hope in God but, rather, under the pretext of testing their thoughts, incline towards veiled sensuality—these God abandons as faithless ones who wrongly believe that they can help themselves on their own. He abandons them to be knocked about by the thoughts that follow. God deliberately does not eradicate such thoughts, because He sees that we love their suggestions and do not hasten to despise them at their first appearance. If anyone doubts my words, let him learn the truth of them through practical experience.

37. Never be unmindful of your thoughts out of negligence; for not one of your thoughts escapes God's attention. The Enemy well knows the justice of the spiritual law and seeks only the consent of man's mind; for, in so acting, the Devil will either render one culpable by assailing him in his labors of repentance; or, if he does not repent, will assail him by bringing about involuntary blows against him. Sometimes, indeed, he may inspire in a person a spirit of grumbling and resistance against these involuntary blows, so as to multiply his pain and affliction in the present life and, during his departure from this world, to prove him faithless by reason of his impatience.◊◊

38. Precisely as God assigns each person the thing that is proper to his nature, so it follows with thoughts in men, whether we desire them or not. When you sin, do not blame the action, but rather the thought; for if the mind did not run ahead, the body would not be able to follow.◊◊◊ Every thought has measure and weight, so that it can be appraised accordingly; for it is possible for one to think of one and the same thing with either passion or simplicity.

39. When we rid our mind of every voluntary evil, we will thenceforth be able to fight against the passions that possess us by predisposition.

40. Predisposition is the involuntary recollection of past evils that we have committed. On the one hand, the struggler hinders this predisposition from turning into a passion, while the victor overcomes it when it is still a simple suggestion.

41. A suggestion is a movement of the heart of indefinite form—an uncertain insinuation of the heart. Those who are experienced are able to discern this suggestion *a priori* and to annihilate it (precisely as soldiers guard a narrow crossing and prevent passage to suspicious persons or enemies). When thoughts bring mental images to the soul, the consent of the mind to the thoughts has already taken place; for the suggestion, when it is not the cause of sinful thoughts and actions (and this by man's will), remains an indefinite movement of the heart, without any particular form.

The person who flees from such vain thoughts is like a firebrand, which is taken from the fire lest it be burned up, whereas the one who does not break away from such thoughts resembles wood that remains in the fire and is burned.

42. Do not say "I desire it not, and yet it comes"; in any event, even if you do not love these vexatious thoughts and evil reasonings, nevertheless you most certainly love the causes or the object that gave rise to such thoughts.

One who is led on by thoughts is blinded by them, such that, although he perceives the activity of his thoughts, he is no longer able to discern the causes that instigated them.

43. When the mind is detached from bodily cares and is out of their

range, it then beholds, in keeping with its distance therefrom, the wily snares of the enemies.

44. There is a wickedness that dominates the heart owing to its long-standing action on the mind; and there is a wickedness that wages war through thoughts, occasioned by everyday things.◊◊◊◊

If, as Holy Scripture advises us,◊◊◊◊◊ we no longer accomplish the will of the flesh, the activity of all of the evils pre-existing in our souls will thenceforth also gradually and easily—by the power of the Lord—come to a halt.

45. Just as a small calf, seeking tender grass for grazing, strays from the herd and, without taking notice, comes upon a remote and hazardous place, so the same is suffered by the soul, which, little by little, is seduced by harmful thoughts.

46. When the mind matures, by the power of the Lord, and wrests the soul from the oppressive and involuntary memories of past evils, which have taken on a vexatious and wearisome daily routine, then the heart is beleaguered by both the passions and the mind, which, like cruel torturers, pull it back and forth.¶

47. We love the underlying cause of the thoughts that vex us against our will, for which reason they come to mind;¶¶ as for the thoughts that appear in our minds by our own will, we assuredly also love, in and of themselves, the things that they suggest to us.¶¶¶

If every involuntary incident has its cause of existence in voluntary things, then, according to Holy Scripture, man is his own worst enemy; for he voluntarily forms and accepts a thought, yet against his will is misled by it.

48. There are three noetic states into which the mind may enter: states that are according to nature, above nature, and contrary to nature. When one arrives at a state according to nature, he finds himself responsible for evil thoughts, confesses his sins to God, and knows precisely the cause of his passions; when he is shifted to a state contrary to nature, he then forgets the righteousness of God and disputes with other people, since they supposedly wrong him; and when, finally, he is raised to a state above nature, he thenceforth finds the fruits of the Holy Spirit enumerated by the Apostle Paul; namely, love, joy, peace, long-suffering,

gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.¶¶¶¶

49. A person who has arrived at a state above nature knows well that, should he give preference to bodily cares, he will not be able to remain in a state above nature. Likewise, the mind knows that when it falls from this state above nature, it enters into a hazardous realm and ultimately falls into sin and into the dreadful consequences that follow sin—if not immediately, in any case at an appropriate time known by the infallible righteousness of God.

50. And when we are still bothered by evil thoughts against our will, let us reckon no one else the cause; for the roots of our thoughts are the visible evils that we commit at all times by means of our hands, our feet, our mouth, etc. It is never possible for a person to be bothered mentally by some passion, if he does not love the causes that incite it.

51. For example, is it possible for one who thinks nothing of dishonor to seek after vainglory? Or for one who loves abasement to be upset when he is not honored by men? Who, possessing a "heart that is contrite and humbled,"¶¶¶¶¶ is ever able to be excited by carnal pleasure? Finally, who, nourishing complete and sincere faith in Christ, concerns himself with transient things and disputes with his neighbor over them?

52. When a person simply recalls the sins he confessed in the past, without the element of repentance, he dampens in himself his hope for salvation; when, however, instead of feeling sorrow for them, he, on the contrary, revives his memory of these past sins by means of corresponding images, then he deposits anew in his soul the former defilement.§ When the mind denies itself and ceases recalling the sinful past, preserving a simple and beautiful hope for the salvation of a man's soul, thanks to repentance and a confession that has already been made, then the Enemy of mankind, under the pretext of a repetition of the man's confession, brings back to him the images of his past sins, so as to revive his passions—forgotten and forgiven, by the Grace of God—and in this way, without his goal being perceived, he injures such a man.

53. For then the mind, even if it is radiant and hates the passions, will of necessity be darkened and agitated on account of the things it has perpetrated in the past. If, on the other hand, it is still clouded over

and feels a sick love for pleasure, its inclination to evil will undoubtedly be hastened, and it will passionately accept the suggestion. And, in both cases, this recollection and [repeated] confession§§ give rise to an aimless and dangerous revival in his mind of prior evils.

54. If you wish to offer a sincere and blameless confession to God, do not recall the kinds and forms of your various misdeeds, but with courage endure the consequences thereof; for on account of our misdeeds in the past, various wearisome and undesired incidents befall us, offering proper healing and punishment for every offense.

55. He who tries to keep watch over the movements of his heart without wishing, at the same time, to experience hardships or contempt assuredly labors under a mental delusion and falls into temptation and the snares of the Devil. It is never possible for one to gain victory when he leads a one-sided war, whether against evil thoughts alone (and not the causes that provoke them) or only against their causes (and not the evil thoughts that are generated by them). For, even if we manage to remove just one of the two—that is, either the causes or the thoughts—after a short while we will again become entangled in one of the two, by means of the other, which we did not take care to remove.

56. Involuntary thoughts arise in our reflections on account of former sins, whereas voluntary thoughts stem from the free will of man. Consequently, we are held liable and responsible, not for the former, but for the latter.

57. The bad thoughts that are born in our minds against our will are accompanied by sorrow, for which reason they are easily suppressed by spiritual power. Conversely, thoughts that arise in our mind by our own will bring joy, for which reason we are freed from them with difficulty. If you wish not to be bothered by evil thoughts, unmurmuringly endure the disdain and abasement of your soul,§§§ as well as the discomfort of the flesh. And this unmurmuring endurance must be exhibited not for a short time only, but rather in every place, at every moment, and on every occasion.

58. He who voluntarily undertakes, and exhausts himself with, grievous things is not conquered by involuntary thoughts; he, on the other hand, who does not accept and endure vexations§§§§ will then, even

against his will, be taken captive by involuntary thoughts.

**E. From Saint Diadochos**

1. Some have come to believe that Grace and sin—that is, the spirit of truth and the spirit of error—are concealed together in the mind of the baptized. This is why they say that one person stimulates his mind to the accomplishment of good things, and another to the direct opposite. I, on the other hand, guided by Holy Scripture and intuition of mind, have arrived at the following conclusion: Before Holy Baptism, Grace incites the soul to do good by acting from without; but Satan, making his lair in the depths of the soul and, abiding therein, attempts to bar all of the entranceways into the mind from the right.

2. From the very moment, however, that we are reborn through Holy Baptism, the Devil is ousted, while Grace enters into these depths of the soul—that is, the mind—where it comes to abide ("all the glory of the King's daughter is within," as the Psalmist says [Psalm 44:14]) without being visible to the demons. From this, then, we can conclude that, just as the soul of the old man was dominated by error before Holy Baptism, so in like manner truth dominates the soul after Holy Baptism; and from this sanctuary of our heart, we sense the Divine as a sacred and holy desire that gushes forth whenever we earnestly remember God. And whereas, in the depths of our heart, a sense of the Divine is developed and an experience of His presence is awakened, within our bodily senses lurk the evil spirits, who hurl themselves upon us, darkening our mind by the indolence of the flesh and the seductive sweetness of irrational pleasures.

3. In this way, then, a grievous conflict takes place within us; that is, whereas our mind is pleased by, and rejoices in, the laws of the Spirit, according to the Apostle Paul,§§§§§ our bodily sense organs, on the contrary, wish to be seduced, dragging the soul along on its downward fall to pleasure. Grace, however, by means of the lofty sense of the mind, permeates the bodies of those who progress in the knowledge of God with an ineffable joy and gladness, on account of the thoughts and reflections that increase and broaden lofty spiritual knowledge. The demons, on the other hand, violently take the soul captive by means of the bodily senses (especially when they find us indifferently and listlessly treading the path of piety), and these murderers thenceforth force

it to do those things it does not wish to do.

4. God has permitted this to happen to the Baptized, in order that man might enjoy the good, if he so desires, having previously passed through the whirl and fire of tribulation, as the Prophet-King David says: "[W]e went through fire and through water, and Thou broughtest us out into refreshment" (Psalm 65:12). Apart from this, however, the conflict between the mind and the senses, by Divine dispensation, is aimed at directing the soul towards the discernment of good from evil, and this so that the soul might humble itself more out of the great shame it feels on account of the obscenity of demonic thoughts. These feelings of humility and shame help it to achieve a more radiant purification. Finally, in this dispensation of God, we must also discern the following intention of Divine Providence: that what we did not preserve when in a state according to nature,# at the time that we received the weapons of righteousness, we might hereafter maintain by the power of God, and thereby render our free will justified by tribulation.

5. From what we have said, we may conclude that the evil spirits are differentiated into two kinds: one kind is somewhat more subtle, and the other is somewhat more material. The more subtle spirits war against the soul, whereas the others are in the habit of captivating the flesh with various material pleasures. This is why the demons that war against our soul are completely different from the demons that war against our flesh, even though they pursue the same goal: to harm man in equal portion.

6. Thus, when Grace does not abide in the depths of the heart of man, as I said, then the evil spirits fully come to lurk in the heart, like snakes in a hole, and do not in any way permit the soul to see clearly or to conceive a desire for the good. When, on the other hand, Grace is concealed within the mind, then the evil spirits, like black clouds, spread to all the different parts of the heart## and are transformed into various passions of sin and into various seductive and fantastic images, so as to captivate thereby the recollection of the mind and to separate it from its mystical communion with Grace.

7. Hence, when the demons that vex our souls inflame us to mental passions, and first and foremost to arrogance, which is the mother of all evils, we must reflect upon the disintegration of the body by death and

decay, as well as the dread Day of Judgment, and we must be ashamed of, and keep a tight rein on, the bulk of our unhealthy love of human glory. And even when the demons warring against our body surround us like a mob and excruciatingly vex us, we must do the same thing; for remembrance of death and of the dread moment of Judgment, governed by remembrance of God, alone has the power to disperse the evil spirits and to do away with all of their snares.

8. That Satan truly battles by means of the body against the soul—which has the privilege of receiving the Holy Spirit within itself—is taught to us with great detail and clarity by the Apostle Paul: "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the Evil One" (Ephesians 6:14-16). By this marvellous delineation, the Apostle Paul shows that our enemy, the Devil, sets upon Christ-bearing souls with fiery darts from without; that is, the same thing happens with the Devil as with physical enemies: It is well known that he who is unable to conquer his enemy near at hand unfailingly uses arrows against him, so that he might be able by the feather of his arrows to take aim and defeat the one whom he is battling from a distance.

9. Therefore, then, since Satan, owing to the presence of Grace, is not able to lurk as before in the mind of the struggler, he hurls himself upon his body and ultimately nestles secretly in his vulnerable body, so as to seduce his soul with the ease of bodily movements.### This is why the monk, and also the virtuous Christian layman, should appropriately enfeeble his body by fasting, lest his mind slip, through the vulnerability of his body, into the seductive sweetness of pleasures. If anyone is able, while still in this life, to subdue the pleasures through ascetic labors and continence and utterly to mortify his flesh by means of the spirit, he will become in his entirety a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit; for such a person, even before bodily death, has already been resurrected. Precisely what I am talking about happened to the blessed Paul and to all those who have struggled, and are struggling, with perfection, against sin.

10. At first, as I mentioned previously, Divine Grace conceals its presence in those who have been baptized, waiting for the intention of

the soul to be made manifest freely and voluntarily. When the whole man has returned to the Lord of his own free will, Grace thereafter reveals its presence in his heart, and the soul experiences its presence through a certain ineffable and very refined mystical sense. But then, once again, this Grace awaits the movement of the soul, indeed allowing, by dispensation, the darts of the demons to become more deeply perceptible to the soul, so that it might seek the Lord with greater fervency of spirit.

11. Thus, if a person resolutely begins to keep the commandments and unceasingly to call upon God, then the fire of Holy Grace appears and steadily abides in the outermost senses of his heart, consuming all of the tares of human dust.#### This energy of Divine Grace is a clear source of knowledge and alertness, for which reason demonic assaults then withdraw and end up far away from these Grace-filled places of the heart, and from there they are completely innocuous and only quietly prick the passionate part of the soul.

12. When the struggler has reached the point of embracing all of the virtues, and first and foremost a complete lack of possessions, his entire nature then radiates in all of its aspects a most profound mystical feeling, which excites a great love for God in the depths of one's being. A consequence of this Divine change is that the arrows of the demons are turned away and lost at a great distance from these bodily senses; for the blowing of the Holy Spirit, which prompts the heart towards peaceful winds, completely quells and destroys the fiery darts of the Devil while they are still moving through the air.

13. Nevertheless, God occasionally allows one who has reached such a measure to fall to the wickedness of the demons, and He leaves his mind unillumined, lest our free will be found to be completely fettered by the bond of Grace; and this is not only because sin must ultimately be conquered through struggle, but also because such a person still needs to progress in spiritual experience. For that which one who is so vexed considers to be perfect is imperfect, as regards the richness of God, Who chastens us out of His great love, even if such a one, during the course of his arduous labors of struggle, is able to ascend wholly the ladder shown to Jacob.#####

14. A person who is in the open air in winter, lacking any other help,

awaits the rising of the sun so as to warm himself; and when the sun has dawned, he turns himself entirely towards it. But when the sun rises, only the front part of his body will be warmed, whereas his backside will be completely devoid of the sun's warmth, since the sun has not yet reached the middle of the sky.★

15. Precisely the same thing happens to those who are at the beginning of their spiritual progress: Their hearts are sweetly warmed, in part, by the warmth of the Holy Spirit, and thus their minds thereby begin to bear the fruits of spiritual thoughts; such being the case, however, considerable portions of their intellect remain with carnal thoughts, since all of these parts have not yet been illumined with a profound mystical consciousness of holy Grace. Many people lack the ability to comprehend this precise circumstance, for which reason they have wrongly come to believe that it is possible for Grace and sin—that is, the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error—to be simultaneously concealed together in the minds of strugglers.

16. It, then, so happens that, during this most acute movement of the mind, our soul comprehends things both fittingly and unfittingly, just as, in the foregoing example, a person standing in exactly the same spot can feel both cold and hot. For from the moment that our mind falls into the twofold knowledge of good and evil, it is thereupon obliged—and perchance against its will—during this noetic movement to bear both good and shameful thoughts; and this is perforce the case with those who seek to reach a measure of refined discernment. Although the mind always hastens to think good, it also immediately recalls the bad, since from the time of Adam's transgression, man's memory★★ has been divided into two opposing recollections: those of the good and of the bad.

17. Hence, if we begin, with fervent zeal, to practice the commandments of God, Grace will illumine all of our perceptions by way of a certain mystical and profound sense, which simultaneously consumes our personal recollections. At the same time, this Grace sweetens our heart with a sense of peace, which diffuses in our heart a steadfast amity. A sublime consequence of this wondrous spiritual transformation is that our heart is so molded that it henceforth no longer thinks carnal, but rather spiritual, thoughts. This astonishing spiritual exaltation takes place in a marvellous way to all those who constantly draw nearer to

perfection and who unceasingly retain in their hearts the remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**F. From Saint Cassian**

1. Abba Moses said the following: It is completely impossible for our mind not to be bothered by shameful thoughts. Every one who has come to self-control, however, is able either to accept such thoughts and commit himself to them with interest, or to reject them. For while the coming upon us of such thoughts does not depend on us, their banishment from our mind *does* depend on us. The retrieval of our mind (from them) is the work of our free will and of vigilant care.

2. Thus, when we ceaselessly meditate on the law of God and constantly murmur psalms and odes, occupying ourselves, as well, with fasting and vigil, and when we ceaselessly call to mind the future things—the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Gehenna of fire—and also all of the works of God, evil thoughts then diminish and find no place in our soul.

3. But when, on the contrary, we occupy ourselves with bodily cares and carnal things, and take part in vain and pointless encounters and conversations, then shameful thoughts multiply in our mind. Indeed, just as a water mill is not able to stop moving, since the water that makes it turn flows continuously (though the miller nevertheless has the ability to grind either wheat or tares), so, in the same way, our intellect is perpetually moving. Such being the case, it is not possible for thoughts to cease. It is, however, completely within our willpower to occupy our mind either with spiritual meditation or with carnal activity, whereupon the quality of our thoughts will be analogous to that which we will.

4. The Psalmist teaches this to us, saying: "Blessed is the man whose help is from Thee; in his heart he hath disposed to ascend" (Psalm 83:6). In other words, blessed is the man whose thoughts are always near Thee, my God; such a one has in his heart the disposition for lofty spiritual ascents. Behold, then, that we also learn from the Prophet-King that it is within our own power to desire either ascents (that is, lofty thoughts that lift up the mind to God) or descents (that is, implanting in our hearts carnal and earthly thoughts).

5. If the moral quality of our thoughts were not really within our power, then it would not be just, on the Day of Judgment, for us to be held responsible for our thoughts and desires. Apart from that, if the demons were so strong, and our free will had no strength at all, then not even one person would be able to avoid sin, given that the suggestion of evil thoughts and the coercion to act upon these suggestions would be in the power of the demons.

6. It is thus commonly confessed that no one can be overcome by the Devil in any other way than if a person wishes to surrender to him the free consent of his will. Ecclesiastes also avers this view, saying: "For there is no objection made on the part of those who quickly do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). The Apostle James agrees with this, saying: "Resist the Devil and he will flee from you" (St. James 4:7).

**G. From St. Maximos**

1. The demons war against people either through things or through impassioned thoughts about things that are contained therein. Through things, on the one hand, they war against those who are involved with worldly objects, and through thoughts, on the other hand, those who have departed from such things. To the same extent that it is easier to sin in the mind than in deed, the warfare of thoughts instigated by the Devil is heavier than the warfare he wages against us through things.

2. Do not inordinately retain thoughts in your mind, lest you also inordinately occupy yourself with the things that contain these thoughts; for if one does not sin beforehand in the mind, he will never sin in deed as well.

3. The mind accepts impassioned thoughts in these three ways: through the senses, through the constitution, and through memory.

4. The mind accepts impassioned thoughts through the senses, when the sensory faculty of the mind is attacked by things related to the passions that hold us captive; whereupon, the senses move the mind to impassioned thoughts.

5. The mind accepts impassioned thoughts in keeping with one's unique physical constitution, when—whether from a dissolute life, de-

monic action, or illness—the bodily constitution changes, whereupon the mind is directed back to impassioned thoughts or towards impious thoughts, according to Divine Providence.

6. Finally, the mind accepts impassioned thoughts when we remember those things on account of which we have fallen into various passions; this recollection likewise moves our mind to impassioned thoughts.

7. It is said that the following four factors change the constitution of the body and give rise to impassioned *or* dispassionate thoughts in the mind: the Angels, the demons, the air, and one's diet. The Angels, as they say, change one through words, the demons through contact with the body, the air through weather changes, and one's diet through the quality of food and drink and, as well, through satiety or hunger.

8. Aside from these factors, however, memory, hearing, and sight also affect man and change his constitution, primarily when the soul is excited by the various joys and sorrows that have come upon it. The soul, then, having been previously moved by all of these things, acts on the body and changes its constitution; and the constitution, having been adulterated by all of these things, gives rise to impassioned thoughts in our mind.

9. Regarding thoughts, some are simple and others complex; simple thoughts are dispassionate, whereas complex thoughts are passionate, since they are made up of both passion and thought. Such being the case, one can observe that a great many simple thoughts are succeeded by complex thoughts, as they begin to move towards mental sin.

10. Let us use gold as a concrete example: An impassioned thought about gold coins suddenly comes to a person's memory. The thought urges the mind to steal, and thus a sin of the mind *and* intellect is committed. By the remembrance, moreover, of the gold coins from which the impassioned thought derives, there follows, as a natural consequence, the recollection of a money bag, the recollection of a drawer, the recollection of a cupboard, and, in general, the recollection of all of the objects that are bound up with gold coins.

11. Among all of these partial recollections, however, from which

the corresponding thoughts are formed, only the memory of the gold coins is complex, for it contains, apart from the thought of gold, also the passion for stealing it. Recollections, on the other hand, of the money bag, the drawer, and the other objects are simple, for the mind does not experience any passion for these things. The same thing happens with every thought: with the thought of vainglory, with the thought of a woman, etc.

Not all the thoughts that accompany an impassioned thought are impassioned, as the discourse has previously demonstrated. We are, therefore, able to discern which are the simple ones.

12. If you wish to gain victory over your thoughts, attend to your passions, whereupon you will easily banish your thoughts from your mind. To be precise, when you are bothered by thoughts of fornication, you should fast, keep vigil, toil, and avoid harmful associations. In order to ward off anger and sorrow, do not let either glory, dishonor, or material things interest you. In order to conquer resentment, pray with fervor for the one who has grieved you, and you will assuredly be freed from it.

13. It is of great benefit not to suffer by means of things; but greater than this is to remain dispassionate with regard to the ideas contained therein.

14. A monk's whole warfare against the demons must be aimed at separating his passions from his thoughts; for in no other way will he be able to look at things dispassionately. Things, thoughts, and passions are entirely different, one from another. A thing is an object, such as a man, woman, gold, etc. A thought is a simple reflection, freed from any material, deeper concept of one of the aforementioned objects. Finally, a passion is an impassioned thought, intermingled with the simple concept and impassioned reflection. If, then, we separate the passion from the thought, it remains a simple reflection—an untainted moral concept. If we so desire, we can achieve this salvific separation by means of spiritual love and temperance.

15. The virtues disunite the mind from the passions and pure prayer, free from distraction, presents the mind before God. If we succeed for sufficient time in sojourning near God and in attending to the passionate aspect of the soul, we will no longer be carried away by what

thoughts suggest—like a ship that runs aground against the rocks—but will, instead, be rendered more prudent and perceptive and, perceiving the causes of these suggestions, will cut them off with greater precision. Then, in this case, the saying of the Prophet-King David will have been brought to fruition: "Mine eye also hath looked down upon my enemies, and mine ear shall hear of the wicked that rise up against me" (Psalm 91:12).

16. When you see that your mind reverently and righteously turns over thoughts of the world without being bothered by them, then know that your body also remains pure and sinless; contrarily, when you see your mind occupying itself with sins, and you do not turn it away from them, know that your body will also fall into these very sins.

17. Just as the body has a world in which it moves, so also the mind has its own world; things constitute the material world of the body, whereas thoughts constitute the world of the mind.

18. In accordance with this, just as the material body of a man fornicates with the material body of a woman, in the same way the mind fornicates with the idea of a "woman," whose body is created by his imagination in the depths of his mind. The man then mentally sees himself entwined in fornication with the figure of a woman.

19. In like manner, in his mind, through the "figure" of his body, one confronts the figure of one who has grieved him; and in all mental sins, the same thing happens, as in all that moves our bodies to action in the realm of the material world.

20. Certain strugglers repel only impassioned thoughts; others cut out the passion itself. Also, one repels thoughts through psalmody, prayer, or absorption of the mind in lofty spiritual contemplation; and he eradicates the passions from his soul when he disdains those things in connection with which the passions are inflamed in him.

**H. From St. Barsanouphios**

1. A brother asked an Elder:

"If I am assailed by an impassioned thought, in what way should I repel it? Should I refute it by rational contradiction? Or should I rebuke

it as though I were angry with the thought? Or should I run immediately to God and cast my weakness before Him?"

2. To this question, the Elder replied:

"My brother, the passions are afflictions; the Lord did not separate passions from afflictions, but through the Prophet King David said generally: 'And call upon Me in the day of thine affliction, and I will deliver thee; and thou shalt glorify Me' (Psalm 49:15). There is, then, no more effective way to humble our various passions than to call upon the Name of the Lord. Rational and sensible contradiction to what a thought proposes is not for everyone, but only for those who are strong according to God, to which people even the demons submit themselves.

3. "For if someone not possessing Godly strength attempts to make contradictions, the demons mock him for attempting this while still under their power. Likewise, to rebuke the Devil is for those great in virtue, who have spiritual strength and authority.

4. "Whom among the Saints do you find rebuking the Devil as did the Archangel Michael,★★★ and indeed doing so as one possessing authority? For us the infirm, then, there is no other means of avoiding what a thought suggests than to take refuge, through prayer, in the Name of Jesus. For the passions are demons, according to Holy Scripture, and only by the invocation of the Name of Jesus do they depart from us."★★★★

5. The brother then asked again:

"My father, how is it possible for us to be bothered by thoughts in the morning? And how can the Devil paint in my heart the face of a woman, or of someone else, and present, moreover, along with the face, that which is suggested by some thought? What should I do to free myself from this?"

6. To this question, the Elder answered:

"My brother, when someone does not work, he becomes preoccupied with the thoughts that come to him; if, however, he is working, he is not at leisure to accept such thoughts. So, wake up even before daybreak to turn your hand mill and grind wheat, so as to prepare the bread that is your food. Take heed, however, to keep your mind on your work, lest your adversary, the Devil, should find an opportunity to throw tares

in your hand mill, whereupon you will grind tares instead of wheat.

7. "With regard to the face painted in your heart, my brother, you must know the following: Faces painted by artists on boards take shape together with various contours and colors, so that the picture drawn of the face might be perfected. Thus, if the board has been previously painted upon, it is no longer able to depict other forms or another face that, together with the former depictions, would present a newly completed picture.

"What does this mean? If you wish to keep your heart free from the depiction of this face by the Devil, you must have previously painted on your board—that is, your heart—a certain figure, and must keep it engraved thereon.★★★★★

8. "Let us struggle, then, to gain strength against the Devil, and God will surely come to our aid in our effort. When thoughts assault your mind and heart, take refuge with great haste in Jesus and your soul will by all means find respite."

9. When he had received this explanation by the Elder, the brother asked again:

"Tell me, Elder, what should I do concerning the recollections that come to my mind of everything I have done, said, or heard; for I am bothered by these things? And tell me, how may a person keep his heart pure and unbothered? And in what manner is the warfare from our enemy, the Devil, raised against us? Also, should one contradict the one warring against him? Please explain all of these things to me."

10. To this brother's queries, the Elder answered as follows:

"The vexatious recollections of every evil we have done, said, or heard are cut off by nothing other than prayer rendered humbly, with persistent effort, and with tears—prayer that does not put forth one's personal will to God.

"The guarding of one's heart (so that it might not be defiled by various images) can be accomplished when the mind of the struggler remains pure and vigilant; unwilling, that is, to accept bad thoughts. When a person disdains the Enemy, the Enemy sees this disdain and hastens to bring on warfare.

11. "As for you," continued the Elder, "if you wish to learn whether

the one whispering in your mind is your enemy or your friend, say the Jesus Prayer and ask him with faith: 'Are you one of ours or the Enemy's?' You may be certain that he will tell you the truth. Your weakness in discerning the speech of the whispering spirit, which deceives by using different tones of voice, is owing to your negligence. And do not say, so as to justify your negligence, that the aim of the evil spirits is just such a deception and thus they cannot be stopped. Contrarily, come forward with humility to God, so that He might help you in your battle against the spirit, while casting your weakness before Him. Then God, honoring and rewarding your stance, may not only send the bad thoughts away from you, but He may even abolish them altogether."

## I. From St. Ephraim

My brother, is it by any chance possible for an island located in the middle of the sea to hinder the waves from hitting up against it? The only thing the island can manage is to drive back the waves.

So it is with us. We are not able to cut off the waves of thoughts, so that they do not hit up against us—especially since we are filled with passions. We are, however, capable of driving back the thoughts and hindering them from entering our souls.

Otherwise, if we allow them entry into our soul, they will dominate it and quickly destroy it.

## J. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An ascetic Elder said: "Evil thoughts resemble flies that enter a house; if a person kills them one by one as they enter in, he will not toil greatly. If, however, he is negligent and the house fills with flies, then he will have to toil a great deal to exterminate them or to drive them out of the house; and he will either successfully exterminate them or will grow weary and will allow the entire house to be ravaged by them."❄

2. Abba Gelasios was frequently bothered by the thought to abandon his cell and to depart for the desert. One day, he said to his disciple:

"My brother, whatever you may see me do this week, bear with me patiently and say nothing to me."

Indeed, the next day he took his staff and began unceasingly to pace up and down the small yard in front of his cell. When he grew tired, he sat down a little, and then stood up again and began walking.

*Abba Gelasios*

3. When it grew dark, he said in his mind:

"He who walks in the desert does not eat bread, but rather wild weeds. But you, on account of the infirmity of your body—go and eat a little bit of cabbage from the garden."

When he had eaten, he said again in his mind:

"When night falls, he who walks in the desert does not sleep under a roof, but rather in the open air; thus, you must do the same."

So he lay down on the ground and slept in the yard.

4. When he had passed three days and nights in this fashion, he became worn out and, not being able to continue this tactic, he rebuked his bothersome thought, saying:

"Since you do not have the strength to do those things that are required in the desert, sit patiently in your cell, weep for your sins, and be misled no longer by the Devil. God is everywhere present and sees all of the works of men. He requires each one to work according to his strength."

5. A brother was warred against by a thought that would say to him: "You must go and visit Elder so-and-so." The brother put the matter off day after day, saying to his thought: "Tomorrow, I will go." In this way, he warred against his thought for three consecutive years.

6. After these three years, he said again to himself: "Imagine, now, that you are going to visit the Elder." Indeed, pretending to address the Elder, the brother said: "How are you, Elder? Well? How long I have desired to see your holiness." Then, pretending to be the Elder answering him, the brother said again: "Welcome, my brother. Forgive me that you have toiled on my account. I pray that the Lord will reward your labor." Following that, he put water in a bucket, washed himself, cooked, ate, and drank well, as would a traveler. And straightaway, by this mockery of his thought, the warfare departed from him.

7. A brother questioned an Elder:

"My Elder, what should I do, for my thoughts badger me [to leave my cell] on the pretext of visiting the Elders?"

The Elder replied:

"If you perceive that your thoughts want to remove you from your cell because it is supposedly too confined, be patient, exhort yourself to remain in your cell, and do not wish to leave it ever again. If, on the

other hand, you want to leave for a short while for the sake of spiritual edification, examine the sincerity of your thought and, when you have ascertained your sincerity, leave your cell."

8. "I have heard told the following about a certain Elder," the Elder continued. "When he was bothered by thoughts to visit someone, he would stand up, put on his outer *rason*, leave his cell, and walk about. He would then re-enter his cell, attend to himself as if he were a stranger who was visiting, and in this way would be freed from the compulsion of his thoughts."

9. Abba Olympios, who lived in the Cells, was warred against by the demon of fornication. His thought would tell him:

"Go and take a wife."

He therefore battled his thought as follows: He arose, one day, made clay, and fashioned the likeness of a woman with it. He then said to himself:

"Here you are: your wife. Now you have to work very hard to feed her."

So he then began working with great labor.

10. After a few days, he again made clay and fashioned another likeness of a woman who was her "daughter." He then said again in his mind:

"Your wife has given birth, and you must now work even more to feed and clothe your child."

He thus worked even more strenuously, until his legs truly gave way from under him.

11. When he had grown completely exhausted by his work and had no strength left, his thought said to him:

"I can bear it no longer."

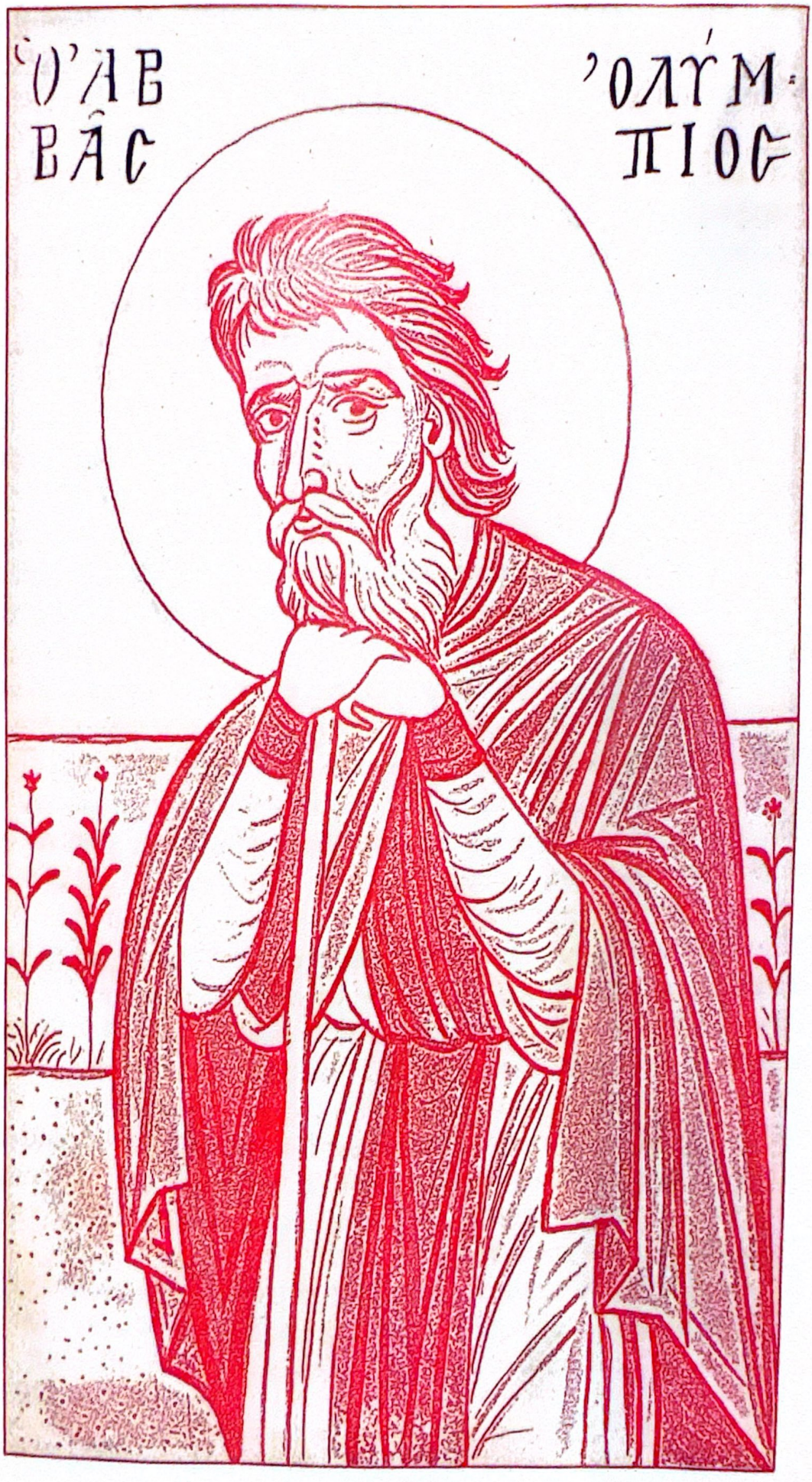
Abba Olympios answered his thought:

"Since you cannot endure the toil, do not ask any longer for a wife."

God, seeing his toil and his resistance against this thought, took the thought from him and set him at ease.

* We call these "wet clothes" because the *χάμπρα* referred to in the text was a kind of woven basket in which people would put their washed clothes to drip before hanging them up.

** The thought handed over to the Enemy is the one by which a person is most




*Abba Olympios*

bothered. Thus, according to Abba Poimen, there are people who endure the attacks of ten different thoughts, but can be bothered by a single one, and against it they struggle.

*** By a "deposit," St. Sisoes is here referring to the underlying causes of the passions—that is, consent and acquiescence to thoughts. When we gain victory over shameful thoughts, then the passions will also assuredly take flight.

**** This advice is noteworthy: All thoughts have a causal relationship, one deriving from the other. For example, the thought to disregard my neighbor comes from the thought of egotism. Having gained victory over egotism, I also cease disregarding my neighbor.

***** A thought is a simple reflection; this reflection can be transformed into an action or a temptation, and this is a test of the person's moral resistance. For example, reflection on a beautiful face may lead either to a moral fall or to an assiduous struggle against the allurement of sin. Having gained victory over the bad thought, the soul proves victor and is crowned.

• Panepho or Panephysis: an ancient city in lower Egypt, modern day Menzaleh el Hayit.

•• A monk must unceasingly say the prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

••• This observation is truly psychologically sound: a sensuous reflection (evil thought) develops into a sensual preoccupation, which, having conquered the soul, is transformed into an inclination for a substantiation of pleasure.

•••• "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (St. John 15:1-2).

••••• "For His mercy endureth forever" (Psalm 105:1, 106:1, 117:1,2,3,4,29, 135:1-26). "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him" (Psalm 102:17).

† Abba Isaiah here calls forgetfulness the most fearsome passion that wars against those struggling the good struggle for virtue; and rightly so, for he is speaking about those who are struggling for perfection. The lover of perfection refrains not only from evil actions, but also struggles to keep his intellect intact from every wicked recollection. With this as his aim, he struggles to keep his mind concentrated on unceasing prayer and noetic vision in general. Forgetfulness, however, steals away the mind and brings it to worldly and vain recollections, to an aspiration for material interests, to wicked and resentful thoughts, and to every evil. When forgetfulness continues to conquer his mind, a monk resembles a ship that has lost its bearings or a man who has set off for a particular task but never arrives—because he has forgotten his destination—and wanders hither and thither. For example, a monk prays or meditates, yet reaches the end of his prayer or meditation without remembering what his lips just murmured, since his mind, having been snatched away by forgetfulness, troubles itself with other things. And though at first the intervals of forgetfulness are short, when one does not battle against it in a timely manner, through strict concentration of the mind on his duty, then such a monk is conquered by his passions and completely forgets his vocation.

†† This is a marvellous and most psychologically sound classification of sin, the reprehensible form of which, if not also its first stage, is silent consent of the heart to an object or thought of doubtful spiritual purity. Does the Lord not remind us of this with regard to sinful and culpable looking, which gives rise to carnal desire, by saying: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her al-

ready in his heart" (St. Matthew 5:28)?

††† "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:4-5).

†††† This is a marvellous and extraordinary notion. We must accomplish the good exclusively out of a noble and genuine love for it, and not out of fear. A soul that does good out of fear will consequently seek some kind of relief from the depression that seizes it within the realm of its own thoughts and reflections, which are, at times, sensuous and sinful.

††††† "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

‡ This is not a matter of truth which a person appropriates through knowledge and study (such as, in some measure, is Christian truth, too, in its dogmatic form and the examination of its course through history); it is a matter of truth that is *revealed* in the heart by the Holy Spirit, under certain conditions, and which a person possesses as a pleasant and beautiful experience of hope. That is to say, in the case at hand, God constitutes both a philosophical truth and a radiant fullness of the pious heart. Such is the meaning of the Beatitude: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (St. Matthew 5:8).

‡‡ The holy author here touches on the thorniest question of Orthodox thought: the question of the moral relation between man and ancestral sin.

Abba Mark masterfully distinguishes between the essence of ancestral sin and its consequences. Ancestral sin was the voluntary transgression of God's Will. And this sin, having been performed "according to the will" of the first created, is not inherited as a moral condition; for it constitutes a personal sin. People, however, inherit the consequences of ancestral sin, among which we can discern death and an inclination for sin.

But what the cause of this heredity is, and what its form is, constitute a point of dispute. With regard to this, the dean of contemporary teachers on Dogmatics, the late Professor Chrestos Androutsos (1869-1935) [Professor of Theology at the University of Athens—*Trans.*], says: "Instead of any such explanation, which obscures rather than illuminates the dogma of inherited sin, it seems better for us to accept it with faith and the confession that we are faced with a mystery that transcends human comprehension" (*Δογματική*, p. 161). Our holy author, also considering the issue "with faith," interjects, almost verbatim, a renowned passage (Romans 5:14), which we have also deemed it appropriate to cite word for word. (*Note by the Editor of the fourth edition of the text of the* Evergetinos.)

‡‡‡ "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" (St. Matthew 6:31).

‡‡‡‡ "The Kingdom of God is within you" (St. Luke 17:21). "Seek first the Kingdom of God" (St. Matthew 6:33).

‡‡‡‡‡ The conscience, in other words, is censured by such thoughts and by the presence of former impressions, being fearful lest they, having developed into persistent passions, divert the soul from future things.

◊ "And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?" (St. Luke 18:7).

◊◊ The position here developed is as follows: The enemy of spiritual law, the Devil, does not encroach upon free will. He acts against man when man gives his free consent.

When a person does not submit himself to labors of repentance, the Devil then torments him with involuntary blows (illnesses, etc.). And to multiply the pain therefrom, he inspires thoughts of grumbling in him, such that, when he reaches his end, he will also lose his soul on account of his impatience.

◊◊◊ The cause of sin is quite justly attributed to the movement of the mind and not to the material conditions one faces: I first think about stealing and then I steal. Stealing, as a thought, is the cause of sin, and not stealing as an action.

◊◊◊◊ Between these, the more dangerous is long-standing wickedness, because it becomes a habit that is difficult to eradicate. The second wickedness, which is completely incidental, one wars against by the successful repulsion of thoughts.

◊◊◊◊◊ "...[A]mong whom also we had our conduct in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind..." (Ephesians 2:3).

¶ That is, the heart is pulled by two opposing forces: upwards by the victorious mind, and downwards by the defeated passions.

¶¶ Involuntary thoughts are probably attributable to cherished causes; for example, my love of publicity gives rise in me to vainglorious thoughts.

¶¶¶ Voluntary thoughts supervene because I love the things suggested by them, such as, for example, a gratifying and pleasurable preoccupation with a certain person.

¶¶¶¶ "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

¶¶¶¶¶ "A heart that is contrite and humbled God will not despise" (Psalm 50:19).

§ A simple recollection of sin is sinful when the sin has already been confessed; but this differs from a reënactment of the sin in the mind. In the first instance, there is an element of doubt as to whether one's sin has been forgiven, or else there is a danger that the passion will be rekindled; in the second instance, there is an element of hedonism, or at least a pleasure-loving inclination in the soul.

§§ It is necessary to confess the sins we have committed in order to receive their remission. Confession of any sin, however, must be made just once before a spiritual Father, following due contrition and compunction. When a person confesses frankly and with repentance, he receives forgiveness directly from God. Repeating one's confession of the same sin indicates disbelief or even a total lack of faith in the rendering of forgiveness. For this reason, and also for the liberation of the mind from the depression brought about by the memory of committed sins, and especially for averting the danger of a relapse by constantly raking up [these memories], the holy Father offers the present teaching.

§§§ "For whosoever desires to save his life shall lose it" (St. Matthew 16:25).

§§§§ The self-treatment by the Divine Apostle Paul is also relevant, here: "But I buffet my body and bring it unto subjection" (I Corinthians 9:27).

§§§§§ "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. ...For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:14-23).

# The state according to nature is the condition before the Fall.

## He probably means the various senses.

### The influence of bodily states on the soul, and *vice versa*, has been psychologically demonstrated; for example, great overeating ensnares the soul in many weak-

nesses.

#### The holy author calls the human body "human dust," and especially the five bodily senses, through which, and by means of which, the Devil wars against the soul.

##### "...[A]nd he dreamed; and behold a ladder fixed on the earth, whose top reached to Heaven" (Genesis 28:12).

★ To make this example more understandable, we would note that in the regions which the author had in mind, there is unbearable heat during the day and freezing cold at night. At the rising of the sun, its rays, still being weak, heat up the surfaces of the bodies on which they fall, but the chill and damp continue to penetrate bodies that are still in the shadows.

★★ "Memory" must here be understood in its original sense; that is, the recollection of all thoughts and ideas that entwine the content of the intellect.

★★★ The Divine Apostle Jude writes the following in this regard: "Yet Michael the Archangel, when contending with the Devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said: 'The Lord rebuke thee'" (St. Jude 9). With regard to this, see the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. XI, first edition, p. 204; second edition, p. 219.

★★★★ "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (St. Matthew 17:21).

★★★★★ Here is meant the figure of Christ the Savior, which banishes all of the scrawling of Satan.

❄ Faithfully following the [original Greek] text, we have kept the word "flies" (*μυίας*, or *μυίγας*) as it is therein. The meaning of the example, however, is more aptly rendered with the word "mice" (*μῦς*). In our opinion, the Elder was speaking about mice (*μυῶν*), but the ancient copiers mistakenly wrote flies (*μυιῶν*, or *μυιγῶν*).

## Hypothesis VII

*That aimless wandering of the mind and forgetfulness spell death for the believer, even as unceasing remembrance and the vision of God constitute life for him and deliverance from every evil.*

### A. From Palladios

1. Once upon a time there lived an ascetic in the Thebaid by the name of Diocletos.* Having started out as a grammarian, he subsequently devoted himself to the study of philosophical issues, though in due course Divine Grace attracted him to the study of Heavenly philosophy. Hence, at the age of twenty-eight he renounced the world and entered a cave, where he dwelt for thirty-five years.

2. This blessed man said that when the mind becomes estranged from the vision of God, it becomes either demonic or bestial.

3. Desiring to learn how such a pernicious change occurs in the mind, we put various questions to him. He answered us with the following explanation: "When the mind of a man withdraws from the vision of God,** it will necessarily either follow the appetitive faculty and fall into the clutches of the demon who leads men into bestial wantonness, or it will be dominated by the incensive faculty,*** from which all of the demonic impulses of wantonness are engendered.

4. I then posed the following question: "How is it possible for the mind to abide unceasingly with God?" The Elder replied: "As long as the soul, whether a man is thinking or engaged in action, is guided by the law of piety and by Divine thoughts, our mind abides with God."

### B. From the Life of St. Ephraim

1. St. Ephraim once visited the city of Edessa,**** where he stayed for a short time on some business. In a neighboring house there lived a prostitute. She became a tool for the wicked designs of the Evil One, and through her, just as through the serpent in Paradise of old, he en-

deavored to assail the righteous Ephraim.

2. One day the Divine Ephraim happened to be cooking some food. At that very moment, the woman opened the window that looked onto the common courtyard and leaned out in a brazen and wholly meretricious manner. Then, after looking shamelessly at the Saint, she said to him: "Bless [*Εὐλόγησον* (or *Εὐλογεῖτε*)—*Trans.*], Abba." St. Ephraim then replied with modesty and restraint, as befits an ascetic: "The Lord bless you [*ὁ Κύριος νὰ σὲ εὐλογήσῃ* (or *ὁ Κύριος*)—*Trans.*]." Again, laughing raucously and indecently, she asked: "What do you still need for your meal?" "Three stones and a little clay," replied the Saint, "to block up this window."

3. That depraved woman, without in any way moderating her shamelessness, addressed the Saint again, saying: "Is it because I spoke to you first that you are acting so high-and-mighty? I want to sleep with you, and yet you have turned me down at the first opportunity?" To these satanic words of hers, the Saint responded with what it behooved him to say and her to hear, without feeling any distress. Thus, he said to her: "If you want us to sleep together tonight, I will suggest to you a place where we can lie with each other."

4. Supposing that the Saint had consented to sin, the harlot seized on his words and asked where they were going to sleep together. "I will not have intercourse with you," replied the Saint, "in any other place than the main square of this city."

"But will we not experience embarrassment and great shame," she asked, "with people looking at us lying there right in the middle of the city?"

In this way, that woman who desired to conquer the dispassionate and unassailable soul of the Saint was herself conquered, since she had no notion of the verse of Holy Scripture that says: "[T]he eyes of the Lord are ten thousand times brighter than the sun, beholding all the ways of men" (Ecclesiasticus 23:19).

5. The noble-minded Saint immediately used her words as an opportunity to offer her the following admonition: "If you are of the opinion that human eyes are capable of inspiring embarrassment in our souls and of deterring us from committing a wicked act, do you not reckon that we should all the more feel awe and fear before the eyes of

God, which see all things, both those done in secret and those done openly, and that we should eschew evil? For God not only arouses our indwelling conscience to accuse us, but also makes it a storehouse of unending torments for us."

6. These words were sufficient to persuade the harlot not only to refrain from her disgraceful lust for him, but also to repent for her previous sins. She at once approached the Saint, fell down before him, and, grasping his sacred feet, begged forgiveness for her brutish desire and her licentious disposition. She also besought the Saint to be her guide and instructor lest, having brought forth sincere repentance, she err from the path of salvation.

7. St. Ephraim readily agreed. Moreover, being who he was, how could he have failed to fulfill such a lofty and soul-profiting request? He gave her suitable advice and exhorted her not to "walk after the evil imaginations of [her] heart," as the Divine Prophet Jeremiah says,***** or to disregard her promises and revert to her former evil ways. He then took her to a convent where the nuns were diligent in the pursuit of virtue.

8. From this incident, finally, we see how St. Ephraim succeeded in bringing a sinful woman back from the path of sin—she who had wanted to ensnare him and cause him to stray from the path of virtue. Indeed, the conversion of this woman was a fruit of his righteousness.

**C. From the *Gerontikon***

1. An Elder said: "These three things should be consecrated to the service of God: to wit, a man's mind should always be thinking about God and not consorting with the works of darkness; his speech, both oral and internal, should always be about God, and he should never utter words that are harmful to the soul; and his actions should always be in accordance with God's Will and never at odds with Him."

2. One of the Fathers said that a man is always inwardly engaged in some activity (since it is impossible for the mind to be completely inert). If a man's mind is occupied with the work of God, the Enemy endeavors to gain access to him, but finds no foothold from which to wage war on him. However, if our mind is taken captive by the Devil, the Spirit of

God may frequently visit it, but because we do not leave Him any place to abide, and because of our wickedness, He withdraws from us.

3. Abba Daniel and Abba Ammoes were once on a journey together, and at one point Abba Ammoes said: "When shall we be back in our cell, Father?" Abba Daniel replied: "Who is taking the Lord away from us now? God exists both in our cell and outside it."

4. Abba Theonas said: "It is because our mind withdraws from the inward vision of God that we are taken captive by carnal passions."

5. A brother besought Abba Arsenios to offer him some words of instruction. The Elder replied to him: "Strive, as far as you are able, to ensure that your inner life is in accordance with God's commandments, and you will overcome the exterior passions."

6. Abba Hyperechios said: "The life of a monk should imitate that of an Angel; then he will overcome sin."

7. An Elder said: "Just as no one can harm one who stands near the king, so also Satan cannot do anything to our detriment if our soul stays close to God. For as Scripture says, 'Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you' (St. James 4:8). But since our thoughts constantly stray far from God, the Enemy easily lays hold of our soul and casts it into ignominious passions."

8. The Elders used to say: "There are three powers of Satan that precede every sin: forgetfulness (of God), negligence (about one's salvation), and concupiscence; for, when forgetfulness enters the soul, it engenders negligence, and negligence, in turn, engenders concupiscence. He who does not fall into forgetfulness does not become negligent; he who is not guilty of negligence does not succumb to concupiscence; and he who, by the Grace of Christ, does not succumb to concupiscence never falls." •

9. One of the Elders said: "When the eyes of an ox are covered, then it goes around the mill wheel; but if its eyes are not covered, it does not go around the wheel. The same thing happens with the Devil. If he succeeds in covering the eyes of a man's soul, then he throws him into every kind of sin, thereby humiliating him; but if the eyes of his soul are illumined, then a man can easily escape from the wiles of the Evil

One."

10. Another Elder said: "In Holy Scripture it says: 'The righteous man shall flourish like a palm tree' (Psalm 91:13). This verse signifies the uprightness and rectitude that proceed from lofty spiritual acts.•• It also signifies that all the vital processes of the palm tree proceed from a single heart. One finds this also among the righteous. Their heart is single and simple, looking only upon God; it is white, as possessing the illumination that comes from faith; and in it there also reside all the good deeds of the Saints. The sharp thorns with which the palm tree is armed signify the resistance of the righteous to the Devil.

11. If shameful thoughts are sown in your heart while you are sitting in your cell, be sure to resist them with all of your soul, lest they gain control over you. Strive to remember that God is watching over you and that whatever you think in your heart is already manifest in His sight. Therefore, say to your soul: "If you are afraid, lest those who are sinners like you should find out about your sins, how much more should you fear God, Who sees all things?" From this counsel there will be revealed to you the fear of God in your soul.•••

12. If, therefore, you cleave to God, then you will remain unshaken by the passions, as it is written: "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion; he that dwelleth in Jerusalem shall never be shaken" (Psalm 124:1). In everything that you do, keep in mind that God sees you and knows what you are going to do even before you do it (just as He also knows all of your thoughts), and then you will never sin. For whatever you are ashamed to do before men, how will you not be ashamed to do it before God and His Holy Angels?

13. Pay heed to your soul, therefore, my brother, at every moment, and do not do anything inconsonant with its nature, and this because the soul is naturally inconstant. The soul is like iron, which rusts when neglected, but is purified when fired. As long as it remains in the fire, it becomes like the fire, and no one can handle it, because it is red hot from the fire.

14. So it is with the soul. To the extent that it remains close to God and communes with Him, it becomes fire and consumes all of its adversaries, who have caused it to rust during the time of its neglect.

When it is purified, like iron in the fire, it becomes new and no longer takes pleasure in any of the enticements of the world, but abides in its natural environment (communion with God), which it was vouchsafed by God in the very beginning. But when it forsakes its natural environment, then it dies.

15. That the soul truly dies when it forsakes its natural environment can be understood by analogy through the observation of the animal kingdom. Thus, we see that terrestrial animals drown when submerged in water, because they were created to live on land. Fish, in turn, die when dragged out onto land, because they were created to live in the water. We observe the same in the case of birds; they feel secure only when they are flying high in the air. Whenever they descend to the ground, they fear being caught by hunters.

16. Such, precisely, is the perfect soul, which has cast off all that is contrary to its nature and has attained to a state in accordance with its nature. Provided it abides in its natural state, it lives and is at peace; but when it forsakes its own nature, it immediately dies.

17. All who attain to this measure of the natural state of the soul view the present world as a prison and have no desire to be entangled in it, lest they die. But even if they desire to be involved with the world, they lack the capacity to love it, since they remember the bitterness that they experienced in the world before they drew near to God and abode with Him. Their hatred and aversion for the world now have the character of a natural property, and for this reason they desire always to partake without distraction of the sweet repose which they enjoy only so long as they remain united with God.

18. Therefore, be attentive to yourself, my brother, lest anything pernicious separate you from the love of God, be it gold, silver, houses, pleasure, hatred, mockery, insults, ill-treatment, or in general any venom that the noetic serpent, the Devil, breathes into our hearts.

19. If the Enemy wars against you through any of these toxins, strive to gaze upon the bronze serpent that was set upon the pole, and you will thereby obliterate the malice of the serpent. For Scripture says, "And Moses made a bronze serpent" (Numbers 21:9), as the Lord commanded him, and placed it upon a pole at the peak of the mountain, so

that anyone bitten by a serpent might immediately gaze upon it and be healed.

20. This bronze serpent is a prefiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ. For, from the very moment that man listened to the Enemy and transgressed God's commandment, he became an enemy of God. When our Lord Jesus Christ became man for our sake, He became the same as us in every respect save sin (Hebrews 4:15), and for this reason, the bronze serpent is a prefiguration of Jesus.

21. Jesus became like a serpent, according to this prefiguration, because He became like man, who had become the enemy of God, though not like a venomous serpent, but like the bronze serpent. For He had not a single evil thought, or any malice; nor did He hiss or inspire anger and hatred, since "He did no iniquity, nor was any guile found in His mouth" (Isaiah 53:9).

22. Our Savior fulfilled this type [prototypical image—*Trans.*] in order to neutralize the poison that Adam had ingested from the mouth of the serpent. In this way, man returned to his prelapsarian, natural state [his state before the *Lapsus*, or Fall—*Trans.*] which, through sin, had been turned into a state contrary to nature.

23. Therefore, if the serpent injects his poison into our heart, let us be zealous to lift up our gaze to Him that was suspended upon the Cross, Who suffered so much for our salvation, and Who endured His Passion with meekness. Neither was He aggrieved at those who tormented and crucified Him; nor did He change His attitude towards them; nor did He respond with a harsh word. Rather, He remained steadfast, like the bronze serpent. If we lift up the gaze of our soul to Him, we, too, will be healed of the poisonous bites of the invisible serpents, that is, the evil spirits.

24. When we gaze with the eyes of our soul upon the Crucified One, we show our faith that He is able to free us from sin. The bronze serpent did not visit those bitten by serpents in the wilderness in order to heal them, but each person that was bitten approached the designated place with faith, looked at the bronze serpent, and was healed.

25. Moreover, many died from the bites of serpents, precisely be-

cause they did not believe in the word of God, as the Apostle says: "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents" (I Corinthians 10:9). Power and help come from Christ, Who said: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (St. John 3:14-15).

26. The same Elder said: "A man who succeeds in persuading himself that he is not close to God assuredly does not have fear of God. Be rigorously attentive to yourself, my brother, so that—being as you are at all times in His presence—you do nothing without His will, but first examine, down to the last detail, whatever it may be that you may want to do—be it to speak, to eat, to sleep, or anything else—and ascertain whether it is pleasing to God, Who sees your heart. You should confess to Him why you want to do this or that thing, and then you will do what is fitting in God's sight. Confess to God in this way all of your deeds and words, so that you might have profound communion with Him and boldness before Him."

27. He also said: "Woe to us, for we are ashamed to sin before men; but before the eyes of Him that sees the secrets of our hearts, we do not tremble or fear to commit impiety or sin."

**D. From St. Mark**

1. Forgetfulness (of God) has no power, in and of itself, but gains strength in proportion to our negligence (with regard to spiritual progress). From love of pleasure comes negligence, and from negligence comes forgetfulness; for God has granted all men the capacity to know what is spiritually profitable for them.

2. Do not say: "What am I to do? for things happen without my desiring them." For you have come to this state by failing to conform your will with the power to know what is beneficial, thereby reckoning as wrong that which is beneficial for you to do. Do what is in your mind and what you have forgotten will be revealed to you.

3. Remembrance of God is a labor of the heart undertaken for the sake of piety. Everyone who forgets the Lord becomes hedonistic and insensitive. Do not say that the dispassionate man cannot suffer distress;

for even if not for his own sake, at least for his neighbor's sake, he is obligated to feel sorrow.

4. When the Devil, our enemy, holds up before a man the records of the many sins that he (through negligence) has forgotten, he then compels the debtor to commit the same sins also in his memory. The Devil thereby takes advantage, not without justification, of "the law of sin" (Romans 7:23; 8:2).

5. If you desire to be in constant remembrance of God, do not reject misfortunes as unjust, but withstand them as things that justly come upon you. For patient endurance in every circumstance that befalls us awakens remembrance of God, whereas refusal to accept what happens to us diminishes the spiritual vigor that resides in our heart and, through our slackness, brings on forgetfulness.

**E. From the *Gerontikon***

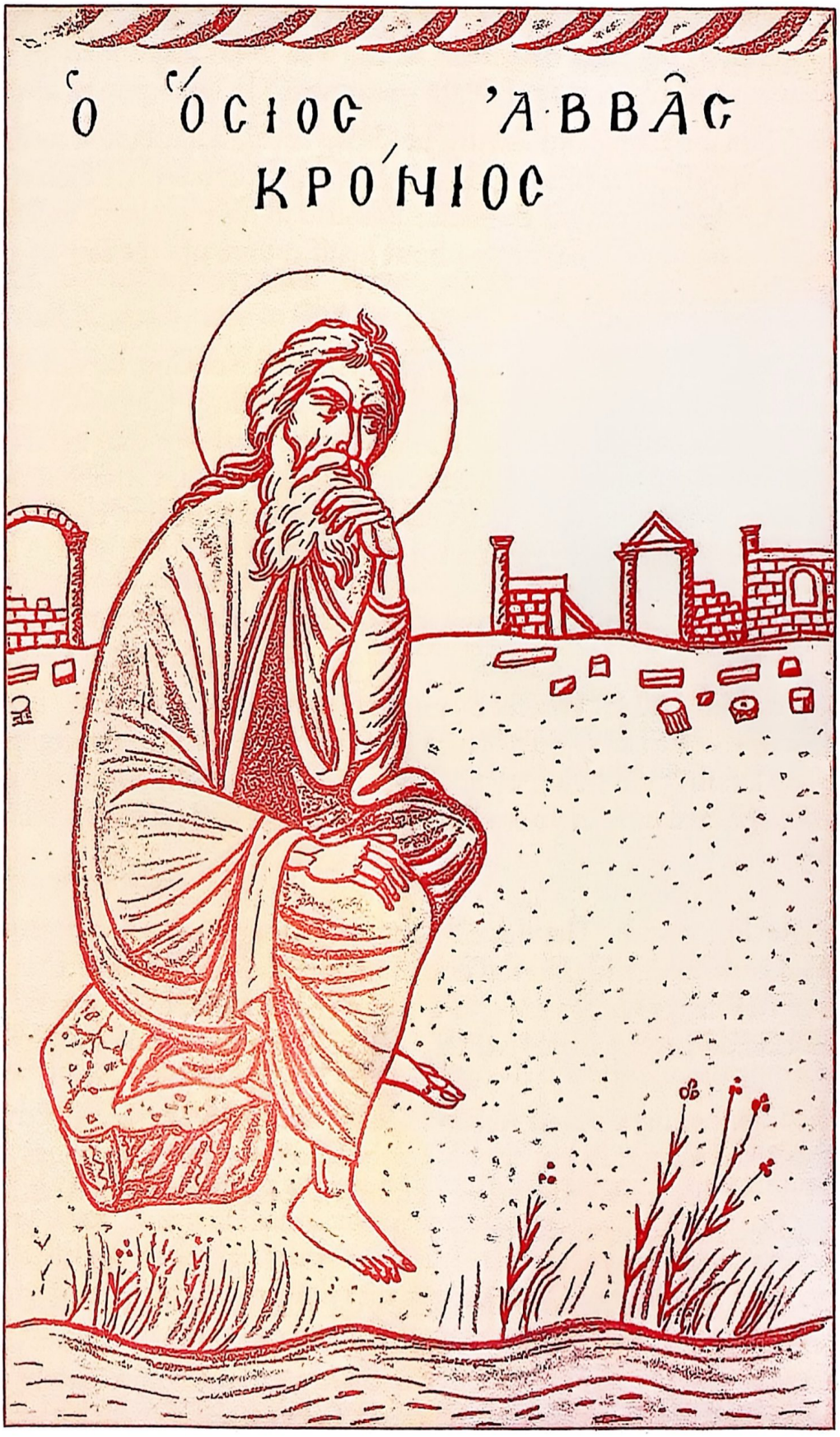
1. An Elder said: "Whether you lie down to sleep, or wake up, or whatever else you may do, if you keep God before your eyes continually, the Enemy will never be able to make you afraid. For as long as this thought remains in your soul, so also does God's strength remain with you."

2. An Elder said: "There are two types of forgetfulness, contrary to each other. A man who has the one kind forgets to eat his bread, on account of the cry of his groaning to God,•••• and is not overcome by the other kind of forgetfulness, which the Enemy incites in one's soul."

3. A brother once asked Abba Cronios: "Father, what should I do to confront the forgetfulness that takes hold of my mind and does not allow me to realize what is happening, to the point that it almost draws me into the actual commission of sin?"

4. Abba Cronios answered: "When, on account of the evil deeds of the sons of Israel, the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant, they brought it into the temple of Dagon, their god; and immediately the statue of Dagon fell down and shattered."•••••

5. The brother then asked: "What does this mean, Father?" "It




*Righteous Abba Kronios*

means," said the Elder, "that if the demons succeed in taking a man's mind captive through his own impulses, they then lead him on until they have brought him under the sway of an unseen† passion. If the mind then turns back and seeks God, mindful of everlasting torment, the passion immediately falls away and disperses. As it is written, "When thou shalt turn and mourn, then thou shalt be saved, and shalt know where thou wast" (Isaiah 30:15).

6. Another Elder said: "It is an amazing thing that we offer up prayers as though God were present and could hear what we say; yet we commit sins so fearlessly, as though God were absent and could see neither us nor our deeds."

* Or Diocles—*Trans.*

** This admirable idea is based on the principle that the human mind constitutes the center, or springboard, for the movement of any higher impulse. Of necessity, therefore, this movement will turn either towards what is Divine and sublime or towards what is ephemeral and sinful, since it is impossible to think of the mind as inert and static.

*** St. Gregory of Nyssa, in his "Canonical Epistle to Letoïos," which was confirmed by the Second Canon of the Sixth Œcumenical Synod (*Πηδάλιον* [The Rudder], p. 625), says that there are three faculties in the soul (this was first enunciated by Plato, in his *Republic*, Book IV, 439d-442d), to wit: the incensive, or spirited (*θυμικόν, θυμοειδές*), the rational (*λογιστικόν, λογικόν*), and the appetitive (*ἐπιθυμητικόν*). We note here, in brief, that the faculty of the soul which encompasses the totality of impulses towards the good or the bad, that is, courage, boldness, anger, wrath, etc., is called the incensive. The rational faculty consists in knowledge, the capacity to discriminate between good and evil: the decision, upon reflection, to do A or B, etc. The appetitive faculty is the seat of desires and feelings, either good or bad.

**** An ancient city in Syria, now called Şanlıurfa and belonging to Turkey.

***** "[A]nd they shall not walk any more after the imaginations of their evil heart" (Jeremiah 3:17).

• See Hesychios: "Forgetfulness leads to negligence, and negligence to contempt for the things of God, indolence, and perverse desires" (*To Theodoulos: A Soul-Profiting and Salutary Discourse Concerning Wakefulness and Virtue*, §32, *Φιλοκαλία*, Vol. I, p. 146)—*Trans.*

•• Just as the palm tree is an upright and lofty tree that blossoms at its peak—*Trans.*

••• Sections 11-27 are from Abba Isaiah—*Editors.*

•••• "My heart is withered, for I forgat to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bone hath cleaved to my flesh" (Psalm 101:5-6).

••••• "The Philistines took the Ark of the Lord and brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. And..., behold, Dagon had fallen upon his face to the earth before the Ark of God" (I Kings 5:2–3).

† Reading "*ἀορᾶτου*" rather than "*ὁρατοῦ*" (see *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXV, col. 248B)—*Trans.*

## Hypothesis VIII

*That we must pray unceasingly; what unceasing prayer is and how it is achieved.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder said: "If a monk stands in prayer only at the appointed hours of prayer, such a monk does not pray at all."

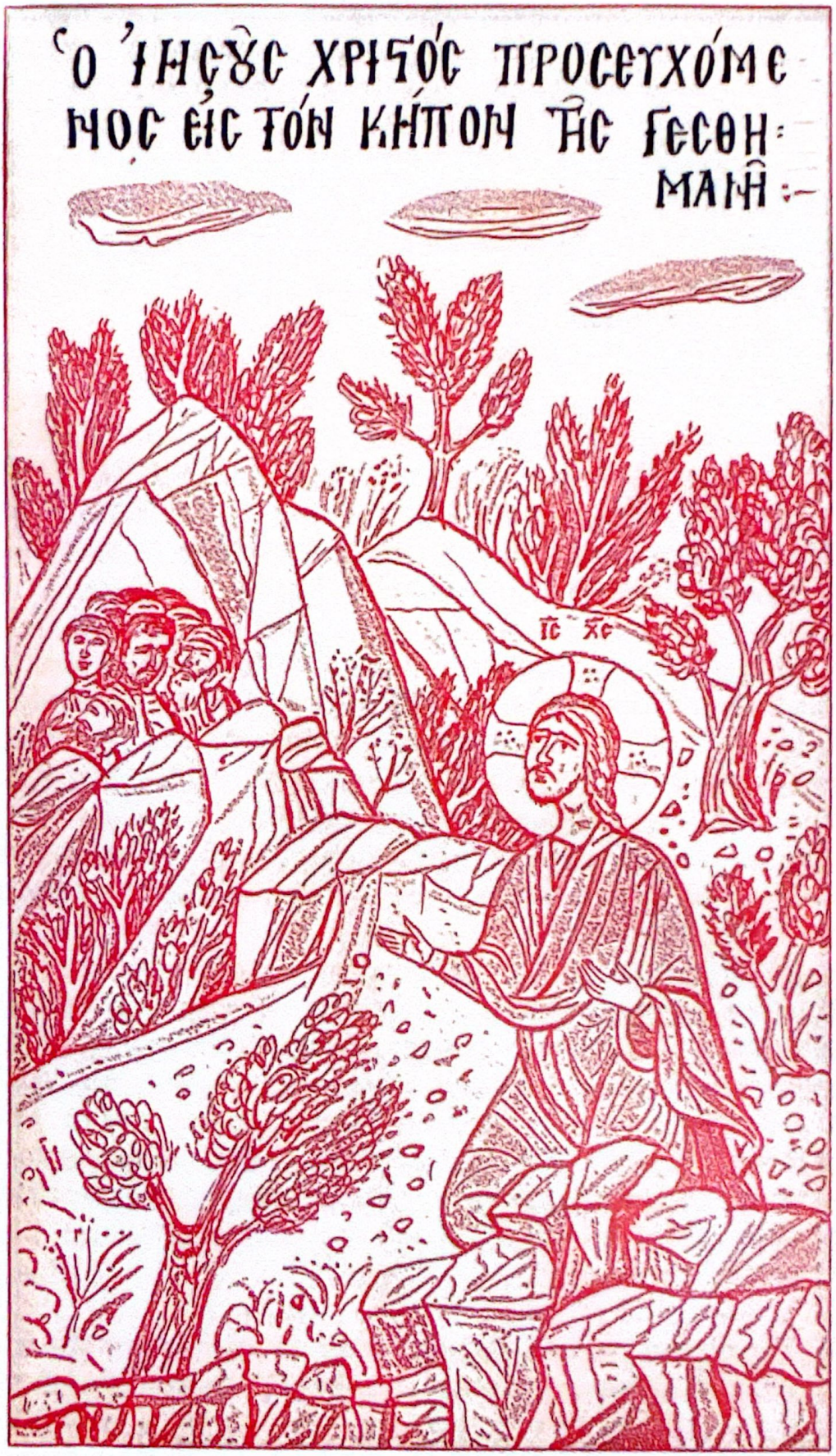
2. Several brothers recounted the following incident: "We once visited some Elders. As is customary, we offered prayers, greeted one another, and sat down. When we had finished our conversation with the Elders and were about to leave, we asked them to say a farewell prayer for us. One of the Elders asked us: 'Why? Have you not been praying?' We replied to him: 'When we entered your cell, Abba, we offered prayers, and since then we have been conversing.' The Elder said: 'Forgive me, brothers, but one of the brothers, while sitting with you and talking, said one hundred three prayers.' After saying this, he offered a prayer for us and let us go."

3. An Elder said: "A man needs these things: to fear the judgment of God, to hate sin, to love virtue, and to supplicate God unceasingly."

4. Abba Isidore said: "When I was younger and remained in my cell, I did not have a set time for saying my services, because for me both night and day were the time for services."

5. It was said of Abba Arsenios that late on Saturday, in anticipation of the dawn of Sunday, he would turn his back on the setting sun and stretch his hands out Heavenward in prayer, until the sun rose and again shone upon his face. Only then would he sit down to rest.

6. The blessed Epiphanios, Bishop of Cyprus, was once told the following by the Abbot of a monastery in Palestine: "By your prayers, we have not neglected our rule of prayer, and we diligently celebrate the Third Hour, the Sixth Hour, and the Ninth Hour."* St. Epiphanios




*Jesus Christ praying in the Garden of Gethsemane*

replied to them by way of reproof: "It is clear that you are negligent, since you are idle from prayer during the other hours of the day. A true monk should have prayer and psalmody unceasingly in his heart."

7. The same Saint said that David the Prophet prayed at every hour (Psalm 118:147): he awoke at midnight (Psalm 118:62), he entreated God before dawn (Psalm 118:148), stood at prayer before God at daybreak (Psalm 62:1, 6), made supplication in the morning, and besought God at evening and noon (Psalm 54:18). This is why he said: "Seven times a day have I praised Thee" (Psalm 118:164).

8. Abba Isaiah the Presbyter of Pelousion, when an *agape* meal** was being served and the brethren were eating in the Church and talking with each other, reproved them, saying: "Be quiet, brothers. I know of a brother eating with you and drinking as many cups of wine as you, and yet his prayer ascends to God like fire."

9. Some monks, so-called Euchites,*** once visited Abba Loukios at Enaton, and the Elder asked them: "What kind of manual work do you do?" They replied: "We do not perform manual work, but, as the Apostle says, we pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:17). "Do you not eat?" asked the Elder. "Yes, we do" they answered. The Elder went on: "Do you not sleep?" Again, they replied that they did. The Elder then asked: "So, when you are asleep, who prays for you?" They were unable to answer this question.

10. Abba Loukios then said to them: "Forgive me, but look, what you do is not consistent with what you say. I will show you how I can do my manual work and simultaneously pray without interruption. For, with God's help, I sit down, moisten a few palm shoots, and plait them into a rope, while I say: 'Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy, and according to the abundance of Thy tender mercies blot out mine iniquity' (Psalm 50:1). Now, is this not prayer?"

"Yes, it is," they replied.

11. The Elder continued: "When I persevere in my work the whole day long, I earn sixteen *noumia*—more or less.**** Part of this amount I put by my door for any brother who might be in need of it, and the remainder I spend on food for myself. The brother who takes the coins prays for me while I am eating or sleeping, and in this way, through the

Grace of Christ, I fulfill the injunction to pray without ceasing."*****

**From Father Paul Evergetinos**

I am of the opinion that the Elder replied to the visiting monks with specific reference to the goal that they were pursuing, in order to set them on the right path; for he certainly did not think that oral prayer expressed through a specific bodily posture was the only kind of prayer.

12. It was said of a certain Elder that for a period of four months he visited a brother in Sketis each day, and that not even once did he find him at leisure. However, it so happened that he once visited the brother and, as he stood outside the door of his cell, heard him saying in lamentation: "O Lord, if Thine ears• do not ring from my crying unto Thee, 'Have mercy on me for my sins,' neither do I grow weary of entreating Thee." That is: "As long as Thine ears, O Lord, are not burdened by my continually crying to Thee, 'Have mercy on me'—as long as they are not thus burdened and I am not a nuisance to Thee—neither do I grow weary of entreating Thee."••

13. An Elder said: "If you do not have spiritual humility or spiritual prayer, at least try to acquire these things at a bodily level,••• and through the bodily the spiritual will come to you; otherwise, you are laboring in vain."••••

14. A brother asked an Elder: "How can one pray always (St. Luke 18:1)? For the body tends to become weak while standing at prayer or at Divine Services." The Elder replied: "Prayer does not mean just standing in prayer at the time appointed for prayer, but praying at all times."

15. The brother asked: "How is one to pray at all times?" The Elder replied: "Whether you are eating, or drinking, or walking along the road, or doing some task (*cf.* I Corinthians 10:31), do not desist from prayer."

16. The brother asked: "If one is talking with somebody, how can he fulfill the injunction to pray at all times?" The Elder answered: "This is why the Apostle said: 'With all prayer and supplication' (Ephesians 6:18). When you do not have the opportunity to pray while talking with someone else, pray by means of a supplication."•••••

17. The brother asked: "With what prayer should one pray?" The Elder replied: "'Our Father, Which art in the Heavens....'" However, he who wishes to accomplish this must see all men as one and refrain from slander" (*cf.* I St. Peter 2:1).†

**B. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)**

1. There is a suitable time for every activity, as Solomon declared (Ecclesiastes 3:1-17). But for prayer, every time is suitable and no time is inappropriate: "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Psalm 33:1). Hence, the Apostle enjoins us to pray without ceasing, since every time is suitable for supplication; and the Lord gives us the same advice, saying, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always," that you might stand uncondemned before the Judgment Seat of Christ.††

2. Let him who wishes to purify his heart keep it constantly aflame through remembrance of the Lord, and let him make this remembrance his sole pursuit and unceasing occupation. For, if we desire to expel the rottenness of evil thoughts and sin from our heart, we should not pray at some times and not at others, but should always apply ourselves to prayer by keeping watch over our mind, even if we do not happen to be near a Church.

3. For just as one who wishes to refine gold, if he allows the fire in the furnace to die down even for a short time, hardens again the compound that he is attempting to refine, so also he who remembers God at one time and not at another loses through slackness what he thinks he has acquired through prayer.

4. And just as constant contact with fire renders iron untouchable, so also frequent prayers reinforce the mind in its warfare against the Enemy. And just as iron that is fired is transformed into the appearance of fire, so also the mind is illumined by the lustre of the Divine fire and becomes wholly luminous and radiant.

**C. From Abba Isaiah**

1. Constant prayer destroys the captivity of the passions, whereas even momentary negligence in prayer is the mother of forgetfulness.

2. Abba Theodore of Enaton said that if God imputes to us carelessness in our prayers and the captivity of our mind to thoughts during the time of psalmody, we cannot be saved.

**D. From Abba Mark**

He who understands the deeper meaning of the Blessed Apostle's statement that our struggle is against the spirits of wickedness††† will also understand the parable of the Lord in which He counsels us to pray always and not be fainthearted (St. Luke 18:1). He who contemns the Lord's injunction concerning unceasing prayer will commit successively more wicked acts of disobedience,†††† being handed from one to another like a prisoner.

**E. From St. Maximos**

1. Uninterrupted prayer removes the mind from all thoughts and presents it naked to God; for thoughts are mental representations of things.

2. As for things, some are sensible, others noetic; when the mind dwells on these, it carries about with itself the thoughts thereof.

3. The Grace of prayer unites the mind to God and, in uniting it to God, detaches it from all thoughts; the mind, stripped of thoughts, then communes with Him and becomes God-like (that is, it becomes God by Grace and participation).

4. In becoming such, it asks of God what is proper for the soul and never fails to obtain what it requests.

5. For this reason the Apostle bids us pray without ceasing (I Thessalonians 5:17), in order that, by uniting the mind to God uninterruptedly, we might gradually disengage it from attachment to material things.

**Question**

6. But how can the mind pray without ceasing? For in chanting, reading, conversing, and carrying out obediences, we distract it with

many thoughts and sights.

**Answer**

7. Holy Scripture does not command anything that is impossible. After all, the Apostle himself chanted, read, taught, served, and suffered persecution, and withal he prayed without ceasing.

8. For unceasing prayer means to have our mind fixed on God with great devotion and love, always to cleave to hope in Him, and to have confidence in Him in all our doings and in all that befalls us, with the same spiritual disposition as the Apostle Paul, who said: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35). A little farther on, he says: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

9. Being thus disposed, the Apostle prayed without ceasing, and in all that he did and all that befell him, as we have said, he cleaved to his hope in God. For this reason, all of the Saints always rejoiced amid afflictions, in order to habituate themselves to hoping in God.

10. I maintain that the highest†††††† state of prayer is this: that the mind passes beyond the flesh and the world and is entirely free from matter and form‡ when it prays; he who preserves this state intact truly prays without ceasing.

**F. From the *Gerontikon***

1. A brother asked an Elder: "Why is it that, when I go out to work, I become careless about my soul?" The Elder responded: "It is because you do not wish to carry out what Scripture says: 'I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth' (Psalm 33:1). If, therefore, whether inside your cell or outside it, you do not cease from blessing God—not only with your mouth, but also with your heart—then you will never be overcome by such carelessness."

2. It was said of a certain Elder that he used to struggle greatly in his ascesis. One day, when this Elder was saying his services, another Elder came to visit him. While the latter was still outside the door, he heard the aforementioned Elder from within, struggling with thoughts and saying: "How quickly, at a single word, all these have gone!"

3. When the visitor heard this, he thought that the Elder was quarrelling with someone, and so he knocked on the door, in order that he might enter and make peace between them. When he entered and found only the Elder, he asked him: "With whom were you arguing, Abba?" He spoke in this manner because he had boldness before him. The Elder responded: "With my thoughts, because I have memorized fourteen books of Scripture, and yet, after hearing a single word from outside, when I was about to begin my service, all that I had learned vanished, and that word alone remained in the forefront of my mind. This is why I was warring with my thoughts."

4. And we, if we indeed paid attention at prayer, would avoid listening to vain words and would accuse our minds, whenever they should wander here and there.

5. Abba Makarios the Great said: "The soul is obliged, at the time of psalmody, with compunction to collect its thoughts that wander aimlessly here and there—just as a mother gathers her children—even if they are going to be scattered again by sin, and to wait on the Lord with sure faith, so that He might come to it and teach it true prayer, and so that, undistracted by various thoughts, it might seek only the Lord."

**G. From St. Isaiah**

1. Unless a man forsakes every activity of this world, he cannot serve God. For the service of God consists in our not having anything extraneous in our mind when we pray and in meditating on Him; that is, we should have in our mind neither pleasure, malice, hatred, nor envy, nor any fantasy or anxiety for the things of this world.

2. For these things are dark walls that imprison the wretched soul and impede it in the air, not allowing it to encounter God, to bless Him in secret, or to pray to Him in purity, with enlightenment and with sweetness of heart, through partaking of the spiritual delight of Divine

love.

3. For as long as the soul feels anxiety over external matters, the mind is deadened and the internal passions act without restraint. But if the soul abandons any concern for external matters, then the mind rejoices and stands up straight (raised up to God).

4. The soul comprehends its inner passions through the mind. The mind takes care of the soul until the soul expels these passions from itself and, with the aid of the mind, begets and nurtures its offspring. The mind and the soul are then in harmony with regard to their movements and desires and they both become a single heart: the soul is subject to the mind, just as a wife is subject to her husband, and the mind is the head of the soul, just as the man is the head of the woman, according to the Apostle (I Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23). When the mind and the soul are united in the Lord, there is no longer any division between them.

5. Therefore, all who are counted worthy of attaining to such a measure are those who pray to God with purity of soul, are illumined by God, are the true worshippers whom God seeks, and are, finally, those in whom the Most High dwells and walks, as Scripture says (II Corinthians 6:16).

6. Concerning these, the Savior also said: "[I]f two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask in My Name, it shall be done for them" (*cf.* St. Matthew 18:19). For when the soul is in harmony and united with the mind, the soul abides thenceforth in the Lord and God in the soul, as our Lord also said in the Gospels: "Abide in Me, and I in you" (St. John 15:4).

7. In him, therefore, who remains faithful to God through virtuous conduct, God also abides through inward vision.‡‡ If the soul is freed from the fetters of worldly reasoning and cares and surmounts those things that obstruct it in the air [demonic forces—*Trans.*], then it abides in God and receives the gifts of His Spirit; for as the Apostle says, he who joins himself to a harlot becomes one body with her, whereas he who joins himself to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him.‡‡‡ As is well known, every relationship contracted outside the bounds and laws of Christian teaching is called fornication.

8. The soul which joins itself to the Lord through the Holy Spirit always abides in Him and is taught by Him how it should pray to Him. Such a soul worships Him unceasingly, remaining inseparably united with Him; correspondingly, the Lord abides in that soul, giving it rest and providing and revealing to it His honors and inexpressible gifts.

9. Such a man no longer sins; neither does the Evil One touch him, since he is born of God. As Scripture says, "whosoever is born of God sinneth not" (I St. John 5:18).

**H. From St. Mark**

1. There are many methods of prayer, which differ one from another. However, there is no method of prayer that is harmful—unless it is not prayer, but a satanic activity.

2. Blind is the man who cries and says, "Son of David, have mercy on me" (St. Mark 10:48; St. Luke 18:38-39), for such a man prays only with the body and does not have spiritual knowledge. When the man who was formerly blind looked up and beheld the Lord, he no longer confessed Him as the Son of David, but as the Son of God, and worshipped Him.‡‡‡‡ When you remember God, increase your supplication to Him, so that if you forget Him, the Lord might remind you of His presence.‡‡‡‡‡

3. There can be no perfect prayer unless the mind invokes the name of God; when the mind prays without distraction, the Lord hearkens to its prayer.

4. When the mind prays to God without distraction, it renders the heart contrite:◊ "A contrite and humbled heart God will not put to shame" (Psalm 50:19). Undistracted prayer is a sign of love for God in one who persists therein; careless and distracted prayer is proof of a love for pleasure.

5. He who keeps vigil, shows forbearance, and prays without feeling stress is manifestly a partaker of the Holy Spirit; he who experiences stress in his efforts to attain to these, and yet persists in his resolve, swiftly receives help from God.

6. If you ever gain a stronghold◊◊ for pure prayer, do not become engrossed in the knowledge of created things offered by the Enemy, lest you forfeit the greater good; for it is better to shoot at the Enemy with the darts of prayer, when he is securely enclosed somewhere below, than to parley with him when he presents us with the knowledge that he has plundered, scheming thereby to tear us away from the very supplication to God that is directed against him.

7. For the knowledge of created things benefits a man at a time of temptation and listlessness, but is wont to harm him at a time of pure prayer.◊◊◊

**I. From St. Isaac**

1. If you are in earnest to acquire pure prayer, remove yourself, as far as possible, from the sight of the world and sever contact with other people. Avoid receiving casual friends in your cell, even on the pretext of doing good for them, but receive only those who share your way of life, who are of like mind with you, and who are your fellow initiates.

2. When you have succeeded in cutting off involvement with the outside world, fear becoming entangled even in spiritual conversation; for the soul is by nature inclined to move from one topic of conversation to another, unless we show a little diligence (in the acquisition of pure prayer).

3. Combine spiritual reading with prayer, for this destroys the confusion that comes from without, provides material for prayer, and concentrates the mind; and in this way, you will gradually achieve what you desire.

**J. From St. Maximos**

1. Whenever a man loves something, he is absolutely attached to it and despises all impediments to his enjoyment thereof, lest he be deprived of it. He who loves God is diligent to cultivate pure prayer and casts out from his soul every passion that impedes him in the attainment thereof.

2. He who truly loves God unfailingly prays to Him without dis-

traction; and he who prays without distraction truly loves God. No one who has his mind fixed on any earthly thing can pray without distraction.

3. When a man allows his mind to dally for a long time with something perceptible, he certainly has a passionate attachment to it: either he desires it, or it causes him distress, or stirs him to anger, or becomes an occasion for rancor. In such a case, unless he scorns that very thing, he cannot be freed from the corresponding passion.

4. The purpose of the commandments is to enable us to view things in a dispassionate way;◊◊◊◊ the purpose of spiritual reading and contemplation is to free the mind from captivity to matter and form.◊◊◊◊◊ Such freedom enables the mind to pray without distraction.

5. The practical method (that is, the struggle against the passions and the exercise of the virtues) is not sufficient to free the mind so completely from the passions that it can pray without distraction, unless it is succeeded by a variety of spiritual intuitions; for the former frees the mind only from intemperance and hatred, whereas the latter delivers it from forgetfulness and ignorance. In this way it will be able to pray as it ought.¶

6. There are two supreme states of pure prayer: the one occurs for those at the stage of practicing the virtues, the other for those who have advanced to Divine vision. The former is engendered in the soul from fear of God and good hope, the latter from Divine yearning and maximal purification of the mind.

7. Hallmarks of the first state are that the mind detaches itself from all worldly thoughts and gathers itself inwards and that, as if standing before God—as, indeed, it does—it prays without distraction or disturbance.

8. Hallmarks of the second state are that, at the very onset of prayer, the mind is rapt by Divine and infinite light and perceives neither itself nor any other existing thing whatsoever, save only Him Who brings about such radiance in it through holy love; then, being moved to contemplate the Divine attributes,¶¶ it receives pure and pellucid reflections of Him.¶¶¶

9. He who has succeeded in combining knowledge with practice is a man endowed with spiritual power; for by practice he causes his concupiscence to wither and tames his incensiveness, and by knowledge he gives wings to his mind and ascends to God.

10. Just as the body, when it dies, is parted from all the things of this world, so also the soul, when it dies while in the heights of prayer, is parted from all the thoughts of this world; for unless it dies such a death, it cannot be with God and live with Him.

11. Demons make war on those who have attained to perfect prayer, in order to prevent them from receiving dispassionate thoughts of perceptible things.¶¶¶¶ They war against those who desire spiritual knowledge in order that evil thoughts might linger in their minds. They make war on those struggling to practice the virtues in order to induce them to sin in actuality. These wretches struggle in every way against everyone, in order to separate men from God.

12. He who prays must never halt on the sublime ascent that leads to God. For just as we must make ascents from strength to strength (Psalm 83:6-8) in order to progress in the practice of the virtues, advance "from glory to glory" (II Corinthians 3:18) in the spiritual knowledge that comes from noetic vision, and pass from the letter of Divine Scripture to its spirit, so also must we act when in the realm of prayer.

13. We must elevate our mind from human affairs and raise the attitude of the soul to more Divine realities, so that the mind might be able to follow Him Who has "passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God" (Hebrews 4:14). He is everywhere and endures all things for our sake in His Incarnate Œconomy, so that we, following Him, might pass through all that He passed through and come to be with Him, provided, of course, that we apprehend Him, not in the lowliness of His condescension in the Incarnation, but in the majesty of His natural infinitude.¶¶¶¶¶

14. One of the Elders said that unceasing prayer swiftly brings the mind to perfection.

15. The same Elder said: "Just as it is impossible for one to see his face in turbid water, so also the soul, unless it purifies itself of harmful

thoughts, cannot pray spiritually."

* Some manuscripts add to this list "the First Hour" and "Vespers" (see *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXV, col. 164D)—*Trans.*

** "Agape" was the name given, from the early years of Christianity, to the meal set out after the Divine Liturgy, at which those who had communed sat and ate together.

*** See endnotes for Hypothesis III, "Messalians" (also known as "Euchites"), Book II—*Editors.*

**** See endnotes for Hypothesis XLVIII, "*noumion*" (singular of "*noumia*"), Book III.

***** According to Abba Loukios, work that is in accordance with God's Will, and also the alms generated therefrom, constitute a form of unceasing prayer.

• Reading "*σου*" rather than "*μου*" (see *Τὸ Μέγα Γεροντικόν*, Vol. III, p. 376 [chapter 12, §28])—*Trans.*

•• The unknown ascetic shows, through these words, the intense and dramatic tone of his cry to God. This extreme intensity causes him such dizziness that he stifles his mournful invocation. By virtue of this restraint, he implores God to safeguard him, so that his prayer might remain unceasing.

••• Bodily humility and bodily prayer—i.e., a humble demeanor and standing at prayer—are the external manifestations of these virtues. Spiritual humility is an internal and uninterrupted state of the soul, which is experienced as constant contrition and continuous prayer.

•••• We have added the phrase "otherwise, you are laboring in vain"—which is missing from the printed text of *The Evergetinos*—from *Τὸ Μέγα Γεροντικόν* (Vol. IV, p. 182 [ch. 15, §256]—*Trans.*

••••• The complete text of this verse from the Holy Apostle Paul is as follows: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication" (Ephesians 6:18). This passage is the basis for the distinction between prayer and supplication. Both prayer and supplication are manifestations of the soul's continuous and persistent outreach to God. Prayer, however, is a more noetic activity, for it is articulated in a definite verbal form, whereas supplication is a spontaneous and unspoken expression of the heart to God, for which reason it can be performed even when the mind is occupied with some other matter.

† See Hypothesis II, Section H, subsection 38, Book III.

†† "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (St. Luke 21:36).

††† "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

†††† Reading "*παραχοαί*" rather than "*ἀχοαί*" (see *Φιλοκαλία*, Vol. I, p. 121)—*Trans.*

††††† Reading "*ἀκροτάτην*" rather than "*ἀκράτητον*" (see *Φιλοκαλία*, Vol. II, p. 22)—*Trans.*

‡ See St. Maximos, *Fourth Century of Texts on Love*, §42 (*Φιλοκαλία*, Vol. II, p. 45)—*Trans.*

‡‡ In this case, *θεωρία* is understood to be the spiritual and immaterial image of God, which is formed in the mind of one who directs his thoughts towards God with persistence and absolute concentration, or the vision of God through the eyes of the mind.

‡‡‡ "What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (I Corinthians 6:16-17).

‡‡‡‡ "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him. And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him" (St. John 9:35-38). Especially noteworthy is the very profound distinction made here between bodily and spiritual prayer—a distinction which is rendered clear by the example of the blind man. The blind man prays bodily for material needs on the spur of the moment, and without having any lofty spiritual knowledge concerning the Savior. However, once he has gained what he desired and has come to know the Lord, no longer does he cry to Him as the Son (descendant) of David, but worships Him as the Son of God; that is, he now prays not bodily, but spiritually.

‡‡‡‡‡ St. Mark is not talking, here, about the forgetfulness of God that stems from unbelief or indifference, but about a passing and avoidable relaxation of intense and continuous focus on God that occurs in the pursuit of unceasing prayer.

◊ By "mind" (*νοῦς*) we are to understand the sovereign noetic faculty, which alone binds man to God. As such, however, it should be free from all material sensation, from all sentimentalism, of which the heart is considered to be the center. [The noetic faculty is also, at times, called the "spiritual mind"—*Trans.*]

◊◊ Reading "*ὀχυρὸν τόπον*" rather than "*καθαρὸν τόπον*" (see *Φιλοκαλία*, Vol. I, p. 121)—*Trans.*

◊◊◊ Although the meaning of this passage is clear, we would nonetheless note the following: at the time of prayer, the mind should be separated even from any impulse and movement towards acquiring knowledge, which constantly swirls around in the intellect, either in the form of an inclination for philosophy or in the form of an inquiry into some specific issue. In St. Mark's opinion, such a disposition and such a desire for knowledge, beneficial though they may be at other times, at the time of prayer constitute a snare of the Devil to distract one who is engaged in prayer.

◊◊◊◊ That is, to eliminate from different things the capacity to inspire passions; for example, to eliminate from money the capacity to inspire greed, from food the capacity to arouse gluttony, and from attractive faces the capacity to stir up sinful longing.

◊◊◊◊◊ We have added the words "and form" (*ἀνείδεον*) from the text printed in the *Φιλοκαλία* (Vol. II, p. 14)—*Trans.*

¶ The work of inner purification, according to St. Maximos, is both negative and positive; that is, it consists in the detoxification of the passions and also in the restoration of health through the recollection of God and mystical knowledge. This process involves the two modes of spiritual life, namely, action (*πρᾶξις*) and Divine vision (*θεωρία*).

¶¶ As St. Maximos points out in the *First Century of Texts on Love* (§100, *Φιλοκαλία*, Vol. II, p. 13), although God's essence is wholly unknowable to the human intellect, His attributes, that is, His Energies, are to some extent knowable. As examples of these attributes or Energies, he cites God's eternity, infinity, indeterminateness, goodness, wisdom, and His power of creating, sustaining, and judging His creatures. God's essence, by contrast, is usually characterized as Divine ineffability or a quality of absolute transcendence, rising beyond description or comprehension—*Trans.*

¶¶¶ According to this admirable view of St. Maximos, the mind exists in a transrational state, in which it no longer moves in the suffocating realm of symbols and fig-

ures, but dwells at the summit of a mystical Tabor, where the attributes (Energies) and Names of God thenceforth become the starting-point for a change and transformation that fills the intellect with the brilliant splendor of the Divine presence.

¶¶¶¶ Reading "*μὴ*" (see *Φιλοκαλία*, Vol. II, p. 26)—*Trans.*

¶¶¶¶¶ Reading "*ἀοριστίας*" (see *Φιλοκαλία*, Vol. II, p. 72)—*Trans.*

## Hypothesis IX

*That one who is always walled about by prayer is impregnable to his noetic enemies; for this reason we must be diligent in cultivating prayer.*

**A. From the Life of St. Pachomios**

1. St. Pachomios said to the assembled brethren: "I often hear evil demons lamenting and shouting: 'Such and such a monk stood in fervent prayer and, since we could not endure being burned by such prayer, we withdrew from him.'

2. "Therefore, brethren, keep watch over yourselves at all times and safeguard yourselves with the name of Christ; for, when we follow His Will, our enemies will be unable to do us any harm. They are nothing but ash and smoke, and they cannot accomplish anything against those who fear the Lord."

3. On another occasion, he said: "Children, let us struggle for our salvation with all of our might, before that time comes at which we are going to deplore ourselves for our negligence.

4. "Therefore, let the soul reflect each day, brethren, on this gross body and let it say to each of its members: 'As long as I am with you, let us eagerly beseech our Lord.' To the hands let it say: 'There will come a time when your unruliness will cease; your fist will no longer serve to express anger, neither will you reach out to seize another's goods.' To the feet let it say: 'The time is coming when you will no longer be able to run along the slippery path of unrighteousness.'

5. "Let it further speak thusly: 'So, before death separates us, let us separate ourselves from sin. Let us strive for this, let us stand bravely, and let us resolutely worship our Master, until He comes to us again and takes us to Himself, at the time of our temporary suffering before death, and conducts us to immortal life.

6. "'Show me, by your tears, that you are aware of these things and

make known to our common Master your voluntary servitude, which alone gives you any dignity. Carry me eagerly, that I might unceasingly give thanks to God, and do not lead me into eternal damnation out of your desire to sleep and rest.

7. "'For, if you are vigilant and assiduous in performing virtuous deeds, there will come a time when you will have abundant enjoyment of good things. But if you are not, there will come a time of judgment and chastisement for the laziness and spiritual indifference that we both displayed. Then I will say to you with lamentation: "Woe to me, O body, that I was bound to you, for because of you I stand condemned."'

8. "If we mobilize ourselves and struggle in this way each day, brethren, we will truly become a temple of God, the Holy Spirit will dwell in us, and no satanic machinations will be able to deceive us.

9. "For, of the countless instructors and teachers that we have, the fear of God is the best, and whatever the human mind is unable to grasp, the All-Holy, Venerable, and Divine Spirit of the Immaculate Nature will show us. For, as the Apostle says, 'we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered' (Romans 8:26)."

**B. From the Life of St. Gregory the Wonderworker**

1. When persecution of the Christian Faith had been whipped up anew and had spread to almost the entire world, the wondrous Gregory sought refuge on a desolate hillcrest and hid there. He had with him an erstwhile idolater and temple-keeper,* whom he had converted to Christianity and who was now adorned with the Grace of the Diaconate.

2. In the meantime, someone had betrayed their hideout, and a great multitude of persecutors were following their trail. The persecutors split up into two groups: some of them encircled the foothills and kept guard over that region, so that if the Saint were minded to escape, it would be impossible for him do so from any point; others ascended to the peak of the hill and combed the entire area. These latter had already become visible to the Saint when they started running straight towards him.

3. At this crucial moment, St. Gregory enjoined his companion to have unshakable and unhesitating faith in God and to rest assured about their safety. He told him to raise his hands to God in prayer, as he himself had done, and that he should pray with such fervor that fear would not prevail over faith, even if the persecutors came close to them.

4. St. Gregory confirmed his advice to the Deacon by his own example. He stood upright, looking heavenwards with unswerving gaze and with outstretched hands, and prayed fervently. St. Gregory and the Deacon both remained in this position.

5. The persecutors very carefully searched the entire area, scouring bushes, crags, hollows of rocks, and ravines, but without finding anyone. They therefore descended to the foothills, supposing that the Saint and his companion had fled out of fear and fallen into the hands of the men stationed down there.

6. They were astonished to learn that not even those guarding the foothills had apprehended the fugitives, and they asked each other what had happened. The betrayer then described in detail the place where he had seen the Saint. "But in this place that you mention," said the persecutors, "we saw nothing except two trees a little distance apart from each other."

7. After the persecutors had departed empty-handed, the informant remained behind. He went up to the spot where he had originally espied the Saint with his companion and where the persecutors insisted that they had seen nothing but two trees, and there he found the two standing in prayer. He immediately understood the miraculous way in which God had protected them, transforming them, in the eyes of their persecutors, into two trees. Realizing his sin, he fell at the Saint's feet and embraced the Christian Faith. Thus, he who a short time before had been a persecutor become one of the persecuted.

**C. From the *Gerontikon***

1. Abba John the Short said, concerning the soul that wishes to repent, that if at all times it seeks refuge in God through prayer, neither the demons nor the passions will ever prevail over it. In order to make this teaching more comprehensible, he used the following parable:

2. "There was in a certain city a harlot who was beautiful and had many lovers. One day, the ruler of the city visited her and said: 'Promise me that you will abandon your harlotry and live henceforth in chastity, and I will take you as my lawful wife.' She gave her word, and the ruler took her to wife, bringing her to live in his own home.

3. "Her former lovers came looking for her and, unable to find her, said among themselves: 'Let us go to the ruler's house and, rather than entering—since he might discover us and punish us—stand opposite the house and whistle to her. Perhaps she will recognize the sound of the whistling and come down to meet us, and then we will not be responsible, but she.'

4. "So they went to the ruler's house and began to whistle. When the woman heard their whistling, she stopped her ears and went into an inner chamber and closed the doors. Since she could not hear them, they left empty-handed."

5. Abba John then explained the parable as follows: "The harlot is the repentant soul, her lovers are the demons, and the ruler is Christ; the inner chamber of the house is the inner self-control of the mind.

6. "Therefore, if the soul that is warred upon by demons through its passions withdraws into itself and has recourse to God through prayer, its enemies shall never prevail over it."

7. Several brothers asked Abba Agathon: "Father, which virtue requires the greatest toil for those striving in the monastic estate?"

"Forgive me," the Elder replied to them, "but I am of the opinion that no virtue requires greater effort than prayer to God. For whenever a man is about to pray, the demons want to impede him. They know fully well that there is nothing more effectual than prayer in hindering their work. Whatever other form of ascesis man might pursue, as long as he perseveres in it, he will attain rest; prayer, however, requires one to strive until his last breath."

8. Once, while a certain brother was standing at prayer, a scorpion stung him on the foot. The pain affected his heart so severely that he almost died from it. However, although he was in such agony, he did not cease from standing until he had completed his prayer.

9. Abba Evagrios said: "When you are dejected, pray, as it is written.** Pray with fear and trembling, with sobriety and vigilance. You must pray in this manner, especially in view of the malice and mischief of the invisible foes who seek to vex us."

10. He also said: "When an evil thought assails your heart, do not seek anything else through prayer than to counter it, and sharpen the sword of tears against your enemy."

11. Some brothers asked Abba Makarios: "How should we pray?" The Elder replied to them: "We should not indulge in vain repetition.*** Rather, we should stretch out our hands and say: 'O Lord, as Thou wishest and as Thou knowest, have mercy on me.' If spiritual warfare looms on the horizon, say: 'O Lord, help me.' He knows what is beneficial for us and deals with us accordingly."

12. A brother asked an Elder: "Why is it that, when I am standing at prayer, I am bothered by thoughts more than at other times?" The Elder replied: "At the very beginning, the Devil, not wishing to worship the God of all, was hurled down from Heaven and became an exile from the Kingdom of God. For this reason, he strives to divert our minds from prayer, since he wants to bring about in us precisely what he himself suffered, that is, estrangement from God."

**D. From St. Isaiah**

1. Do not neglect your spiritual duties, lest you fall into the hands of your enemies.

2. Compel yourself to study the Psalms, for this safeguards you from captivity to filthy thoughts.

3. Love unceasing prayer, so that your heart might be enlightened.

4. Do not be hasty in fulfilling your spiritual duties, lest you be devoured by noetic beasts.

5. Be careful not to be negligent in carrying out your spiritual duties; for these bring enlightenment to your soul.

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**E. From St. Mark**

1. My brother, know that those who cultivate prayer and humility do not fall, whereas those who are negligent about these virtues are overcome unawares by vainglory and worldly cares, and thus easily fall.

2. For this reason, the Devil does not deter us from thinking about all manner of worldly concerns or busying ourselves with them, and he does this for the sole purpose of leading us astray from prayer and humility; for he knows that he will eventually be able to rob a man of whatever he does without prayer and humility, even if it happens to be good.

3. By prayer we mean not only that which is accomplished by means of the body, but also that which is offered to God with an undistracted mind.

4. For if either one of these (the body or the mind) is inopportunely distracted, the other cannot stand before God on its own, but is governed by its own will.

5. Hence, not only those who neglect prayer, but also those who do not pay attention to the movements of their mind, are subject to demonic assaults.

**F. From St. Ephraim**

He who prays with vigilance burns the demons, but he who lets his mind wander while he is praying will become their laughingstock.

* See the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. XI, 1st ed., pp. 438, 439, 444; 2nd ed., pp. 509, 510, 515.

** "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms" (St. James 5:13); "In mine affliction I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God " (Psalm 17:7).

*** "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking"(St. Matthew 6:6-7).

## Hypothesis X

*What the power of prayer is; that through prayer every good thing is given to the man of God; that through prayer man is united to God.*

### A. From the Life of St. John the Merciful

1. There lived in Alexandria, during the years of St. John the Merciful, two clergymen.* They followed as their profession the processing of animal skins (tanners) and were neighbors. Of the two, one was married, had children, and cared for his parents, who lived in the same house. All of these he supported by his own manual labor. For all of this, he was punctual in attending Church gatherings and services and in prayer.

2. The other, though he was single and more proficient in his trade, working at it with greater care, could not even support himself. Seeing the adequate earnings of his fellow tradesman and falling to jealousy of him, the single man confronted the other clergyman one day, being unable to control the anger that he felt. He said to him:

"I implore you in the name of God to tell me, without concealing your secret: How do you succeed in so richly arranging your economic affairs, since it is well known that you are not highly accomplished in your trade, while I, who know the trade better and work more than you, suffer and am in danger of going hungry?"

3. The other tanner, in order to make his interlocutor a lover of Church services, since he was remiss in the gatherings for services, said to him:

"I, too, my brother, previously suffered immensely from economic woes. But from the moment that I resolved to attend services regularly and without missing any, I was able to achieve economic comfort. It often happens that, returning from services, I find on the road money that permits me to enjoy the good course of things that you see. If you want to heed me, then, follow me and let us go together to services, and be assured that you will find great relief."

4. His fellow tradesman, who could not find satisfaction through his work, trusting in the man's words, thereafter made it a habit of accompanying him to services everyday. For this reason, he began to feel not only great internal joy, but even noticed the material blessings brought upon his household by the blessings of God. Moved and grateful, he thanked his fellow tradesman for his valuable advice.

5. So, his fellow tradesman, thinking the opportunity appropriate, revealed his stratagem.

"My brother," he told the single man, "I never found any money on the road. I said that to stimulate your zeal, so that you would attend Church services and meetings."

6. This pious artifice was made known to St. John the Merciful, who was impressed by the good intention of the clergyman. For this reason, he deigned him worthy of Ordination as a Presbyter.

**B. From the *Gerontikon***

1. A certain monk did no work, but continually prayed, without ceasing. Every evening, when he entered into his cell, he would find bread ready for him, and he would eat it.

2. One day, a brother visited him, who had with him tender stalks of palms. So the monk, encouraged to do so by his visitor, took some and began to labor (at weaving them). As soon as evening fell, he went into his cell, as usual, to eat the food provided for him from on high. He found nothing.

He then fell asleep, saddened. In his sleep, he was given the following revelation from God: "When you spent all of your time in communion with Me, I looked after you. Now, however, that you have begun to work, you can earn your food from the labor of your handiwork."

3. There once lived in asceticism a hermit Elder in Sinai. Now, one day, as he was coming from where he lived, he encountered a brother, who said to him, with a sigh: "I am worried on account of the drought."

"Why?" the Elder asked. "Have you not prayed and entreated God for it to rain?"

"Not only do I pray," the brother replied, "but I have implored God

for His intercessions. Yet, it does not rain."

"Certainly, then," the Elder said, "you have not prayed regularly and from the depth of your soul. If you want to confirm this, let us pray together."

4. Then the ascetic Elder raised up his hands towards Heaven and began to pray. Immediately it began to rain.

The minute he saw this miracle, the brother was overcome by awe and fell at the feet of the Elder. And the Elder forthwith departed from the place.

5. Once, several brothers visited Abba Anthony and asked him to explain a passage from Leviticus.** The Elder, without saying a thing, went out of his cell and into the desert. Abba Ammonas, who was present, knowing the habits of St. Anthony (to pray in private), secretly followed him, without the Saint realizing it.

6. With amazement, he confirmed the following:

"St. Anthony, having removed himself a little into the desert, stood in prayer and confidently cried out to God: 'My God, send Moses to me, so that he can teach me the meaning of this passage.' Immediately, I heard a voice from Heaven, speaking with St. Anthony."

Abba Ammonas then noted that, while he heard the voice, what was relayed to St. Anthony he could not comprehend.

7. Abba Doulas relates the following incident regarding Abba Bessarion, whose disciple Abba Doulas was. Abba Doulas says that he went to the cell of his Elder and found him standing in prayer, with his hands raised up to the heavens. "In this position, he remained for fourteen days. Afterwards, as though reviving from a vision, he called me and said: 'Follow me.'

8. "So, I went out of his cell again and we proceeded towards the desert. From the heat of the desert, I became thirsty and said: 'I am thirsty.'

"Therewith Abba Bessarion took my overgarment and went so far away from me that I could not even reach him by throwing a rock. Having prayed, he returned with my outer garment filled with water.

9. "Continuing, we walked for some time and arrived at Lyko,***

where we met St. John. Having greeted one another, we recited a blessing.

"Then we sat, and the Elders began to converse. During their conversation, Abba Bessarion referred to the vision he had seen during his time of prayer. That is, he said that there had been a decision to destroy all of the sanctuaries of the idolaters.**** In fact, very shortly thereafter, all of the pagan altars were destroyed."

10. Abba Lot visited Abba Joseph and said to him, "In keeping with my strength, I do a few services, I fast a little, I pray some, and remain silent to some extent. Also, within my power, I try to keep my thoughts in check. What remains, then, for me to do?"

11. Abba Joseph got up from his place, opened his hands out toward Heaven, his fingers becoming like ten burning lamps. He then said:

"If you wish, you can become wholly like a flame, by way of the fervor of your prayer and your love towards God."

12. Once Abba Moses went to draw water from the well. There, he found Abba Zacharias, praying over the well. On the head of Abba Zacharias, he saw the Holy Spirit come to rest.

13. Abba Iakovos said that one of the Elders told him the following: "When I was younger and lived in the desert, there was a young boy nearby who was struggling all alone. Once I visited him, to monitor him, and I saw him praying and persistently asking God to let him live at peace with the wild animals. After this fervent prayer—oh, the wonder!—the following event occurred. Next to where he was living, there also lived a hyena that was nursing her young. So, the young boy also began to nurse, without the wild beast becoming at all fierce."

14. The same Abba continues: "Another time I saw this young boy in prayer, persistently entreating the Lord and saying: 'Give to me, Master, the gift to suffer no harm from fire.' Immediately after this, having lighted a fire, he went into it and knelt, praying in the flames."

15. A brother asked Abba Sisoes: "How can I be saved?"

St. Sisoes answered: "If you wish to please God, stand far off from the world, rising above the world, leaving aside creation and moving towards God. Attend to prayer and spiritual contrition, so as to be united

with God, whereupon you will surely achieve peace in this life and the next."

16. It is said of Abba Tithoes that, unless he lowered his hands while praying, his mind would be swept away and lifted up to other spiritual worlds. So, if he happened to be praying with other brothers, he was quick to take care that his hands were shortly lowered, that his mind would not be caught up and pass too much time in prayer (such that those with him might get hungry).

17. The Fathers have said that the mirror of the soul of a monastic is prayer.

18. Once Abba Pambo journeyed among the various brothers scattered around Egypt. Now seeing, during his sojourn, some lay people sitting, he said: "Stand up and kiss any monks who may pass, and receive their blessing; for they speak constantly with God and thus their mouths are holy."

19. A brother went up to Sketis, to the cell of Abba Arsenios, in order to pay him a visit. Before knocking, so that the Abba would open the door, he stooped down and looked through a small window, and to his amazement he saw the Elder standing in a posture of prayer, as though he were engulfed in flames. It is of course obvious that the brother himself was worthy of seeing such a revelation.

20. After a short while, he knocked and Abba Arsenios came out. Seeing the brother amazed and dazzled, he asked:

"Have you been knocking for a long time?"

"No," the brother replied.

After that, addressing a few didactic words to the brother, he sent him on his way, with God's blessing.

21. There was an ascetic Elder dwelling in the lower part of Egypt. In his simplicity, this monk had said that Melchizedek was the son of God.

22. This fact came to the attention of the Blessed Cyril, Archbishop of Alexandria. Wishing to correct the error of the Elder, the Blessed Cyril summoned him. The Elder having come, the Divine Cyril, knowing him

to be a man of God who had performed many miracles and wonders, and knowing that when the Elder asked God about some matter, God would reveal to him the truth (and, moreover, knowing that what the Elder had said about Melchizedek he had said from naïveté and simplicity), he employed the following stratagem, saying to him:

"Abba, please listen to me. A certain thought tells me that Melchizedek is the son of God, while another thought suggests to me that he is not the son of God, but an Archpriest and, as such, a man. Since I do not know which of the two thoughts is true, and I have doubts and hesitations, I for this reason called you here, and I would like you to make supplications to God to reveal to you the truth."

23. The Elder, having boldness and courage before God, on account of his virtue and asceticism, replied to the Archbishop:

"Give me three days' time, and I will ask God to reveal this matter to me, so as to solve your dilemma."

The Elder then departed, and for three days he implored God to reveal to him the truth of the matter. Having received a revelation, on the third day, he went to tell the Archbishop: "Melchizedek was a man."

24. Archbishop Cyril, with understandable curiosity, asked the Elder: "How, Abba, were you informed of the truth?"

The Elder answered: "As I was praying, God revealed to me all of the Patriarchs, from Adam to Melchizedek. I saw all of them pass before me. And when the Archpriest Melchizedek passed before me, an Angel of the Lord said to me: 'This is the Archpriest Melchizedek; you may firmly trust, then, that this is true.'"

From that time on, the Elder firmly preached that Melchizedek was a man.

25. The disciple of Abba Silouan, Zacharias, once went into the Abba's cell and found him praying in an ecstatic state, with his hands uplifted towards Heaven. Not wishing to disturb him, he carefully closed the door and left. When he later went into his cell again, around the sixth hour,***** as well as at the ninth hour, he found Abba Silouan in the same condition as before.

26. And finally at the tenth hour, going in again, he found the Elder resting.

"What happened today, my Father?"

"Today," the Elder responded, "I fell ill, my child."

Thereupon, his disciple Zacharias fell at the feet of the Abba and, warmly embracing them, said: "I will not leave until you have told me what you saw."

The Elder, giving into his God-loving request, told him:

"I was taken up into Heaven and I saw the glory of God. In that state I remained until now, when you came back."

27. The Elders said to Abba Elias, in Egypt, about Abba Agathon, that he was a good and virtuous brother.

Abba Elias replied: "He is good and virtuous, in keeping with the age in which he lives."

28. Thus, the Elders asked: "According to the ancient Fathers, what would he have been?"

The Elder again replied:

"I repeat that, in keeping with the age in which he lives, he is good and virtuous. He has not reached, however, the measure of perfection of the ancient Fathers. I knew a Father from the past age—a man in Sketis—who was able, by way of his prayer, to stop the very movement of the sun, as did Jesus of Navi." •

The Elders were amazed by this account and glorified God.

29. Abba Doulas, the disciple of Abba Bessarion, related the following wondrous incident, rendered by the prayers of Abba Bessarion.

"Once," he says, "we went to visit an Elder. On the way, the sun began to set before we reached the cell of the Elder. So, Abba Bessarion, with fervent and sure prayer to God, said: 'I ask Thee, my God, not to let the sun set before we reach Thy servant.' His prayer was heard, and the miracle took place."

30. "Another time," Abba Doulas continued, "we were walking along the shore of the sea. I was very thirsty and said to the Elder, 'Abba, I am very thirsty.'

"Abba Bessarion, having prayed with fervor, said to me, 'Drink from the sea.'

"And, oh the wonder! The sea water had become sweet and thus abated my thirst. Indeed, I filled a container, in order to have it as a supply for our journey.

31. "Seeing this, Abba Bessarion asked me: 'Why did you fill that container with water?'

"'Forgive me, my Father,' I answered, 'but I might get thirsty again on the road.'

"But he thus said to me, with total trust in God: 'The God Who is here and performed this miracle is found everywhere.'"

32. "Yet another time," Abba Doulas continued relating, "it happened that Abba Bessarion had to cross the Nile. So, he prayed and crossed the river, walking to the opposite bank.

"The moment that I saw him, I did a prostration and asked him: 'How did it feel, my Father, to walk on the water?'

"'The water,' Abba Bessarion replied, 'I felt up to my ankles; otherwise, I felt as though I were walking on firm ground.'"

33. Once Abba Ammoun went to meet Abba Anthony in the desert. He lost his way, however, and began wandering in the desert. In the critical situation in which he found himself, Abba Ammoun fervently prayed to God: "Lord my God, do not let Thy creature be lost here in the desert."

Immediately, thereupon, there appeared to him a human hand, as though extended from Heaven, and it indicated to him the road, right up to the moment that he stood outside the cave of St. Anthony the Great.

34. Abba Miles was once passing through a certain place. Someone who was falsely accused of murder had just been captured there. The Elder approached the captured man and asked him what had happened to him. The man answered:

"I have been unjustly accused, my Abba."

The Abba thus addressed those who had bound him, and asked them:

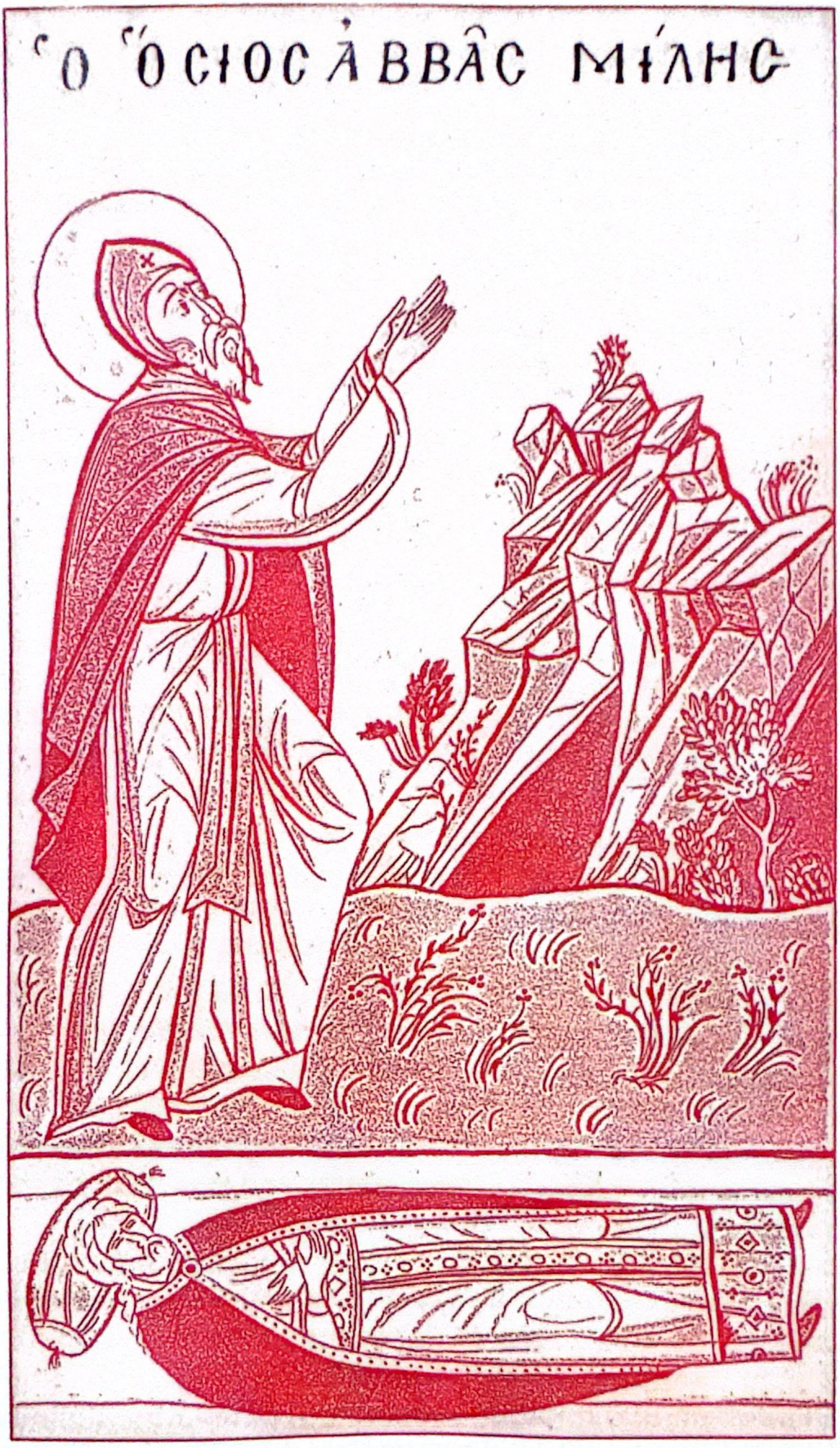
"Where is the murder victim?"

Indeed, they showed him the murdered man.

The Abba commanded everyone present to pray, so that God might show them a miracle.

35. While they were all eagerly praying, the Elder raised his hands to God, and immediately—oh, the wonder—the dead man revived.

In front of all of those who were present, the Elder asked the resur-

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rected dead man, "Tell us, brother, who murdered you?"

And the resurrected dead man said: "I went into the Church and gave some money to the Presbyter. Then the Presbyter, without any reason at all, rose up and killed me. Right away he dragged away my corpse and left it in front of the cell of this Abba, who is now being accused as a murderer. And now, I would ask you, gather my things and send them to my children."

36. After he had said this, Abba Miles said to the resurrected dead man: "Now, go back to sleep, until the day that the Lord comes to resurrect you, on the Day of Judgment."

37. Abba Makarios the Egyptian told the following spiritually moving story:

Once he was staying at Sketis and two young men from a foreign place showed up. Of the two, one had a beard, while the other was only beginning to grow peach fuzz on his face. Anyway, these two approached Abba Makarios, obviously unfamiliar with him, and asked:

"Abba, where is Abba Makarios' cell?"

"What do you want with him?" Abba Makarios asked.

"We have had good reports about him," they said, "and we would like to know him."

"I am he," Abba Makarios told them.

So, the two strangers did a prostration and said to him: "We would like to stay here, in Sketis."

38. "I," Abba Makarios continued, "saw that they were both well-dressed and wealthy, so I said to them: 'You cannot remain here.'

"The older of the two strangers replied to me: 'If we cannot stay here, then we will go to some other place.'

"After this decision by the two friends, I thought: 'Why drive them away and scandalize them? Let them remain, and the work and strenuous labors will make them leave on their own.'

39. "So, I said to the two: 'If you are able, then come and build your own cell.'

"'Show us, Abba, the place, and we will build it.'

"I gave them an axe, a sack with some dried pieces of bread and salt, and pointed them to an isolated rock and told them: 'Break up the rock, bring some wood from the marsh, and build yourself a cell in which to

stay.'

40. "Thereafter, the two strangers asked: 'At what handiwork do the Fathers here labor?'

"'Weaving baskets,' I answered.

"Indeed, I gathered some tender shoots from the marsh and showed them how to start weaving the stems and how to sew them together, explaining to them:

"'You can make baskets and give them to the overseers, and they will give you bread.'

41. "Having given them, as well, an ascetic canon (prayer rule), I left them alone and went my way.

"They, with patience, did all that I had ordered them to do, but did not come to see me for three years.

"During this period, I had this thought: 'Alas, with what spiritual labor can they be occupied, not having come, for such a period of time, to ask counsel of me or to reveal their thoughts (to confess) to me? Others come from afar; yet these, so near, why do they not come?' But I noticed something else. They came to the Church in Sketis, in silence, only in order to commune and to take *Antidoron*.

42. "That God might illumine me and throw light on my questions, I fasted for a week and implored Him—fervently praying—to reveal the deeds of these young strangers.

"As soon as my week of spiritual preparation had ended, I left my cell to go to see how they were progressing. I knocked on their door, they opened it, kissed me in silence, and, having given a blessing, I sat down. The older one motioned to the younger one, who left. The older one remained and sat down, silently, weaving baskets. He said nothing until the ninth hour.

43. "At the ninth hour, the older one tapped out something in code, and the younger one entered and cooked some food. At the beckoning of the older one, the younger one set the table, placed on it three pieces of dried bread, and waited silently. At that point, I said, 'Alright, get up and let us eat.'

"Having eaten, they brought a pitcher and we also drank some water.

44. "In the late afternoon, the first (the older) of the two said: 'Are you leaving?'

"'No,' I said, 'I will be sleeping here.' They then brought me a straw mat to sleep on, and put it in one corner of the cell.

"They removed their belts and *polystauria* [a monastic garment, made of plaited cord in the form of Crosses and worn almost like a Western scapular—*Trans.*] and lay down together on another straw mat.

"Sensing the worthiness of these two strangers, I asked God to reveal to me their works.

45. "And, indeed, it did not take long for me to know the excellence of their spiritual labors. During the time that they thought that I was sleeping, they rose up and, very quietly, raised their hands towards Heaven to pray. At that very time, I saw the demons come like flies and surround the mouth and eyes of the younger one; at the same time, an Angel drove away the demons with a sword of fire, and they, on this account, dared not approach the older one.

46. "Around sunrise, they sat, waiting. When the sun rose, they acted as though they were just awakening from sleep.

"The older one said to me: 'Is it blessed that we might read the twelve Psalms?'

"'Yes,' I replied.

"The younger one, thereupon, began chanting five Psalms of six verses each, with one 'Alleluia.' As soon as he would finish a verse, there would come out of the younger brother's mouth a flame of fire, rising up to Heaven. The same happened with the older one, too; when he chanted, a cord of fire would come out of his mouth and reach up to Heaven. I also said a few Psalms from memory and got up to leave.

47. "Leaving these two foreign brothers, I told them: 'And pray for me.' They kissed me, without saying a word.

"After a short time, the older brother died and, three days later, the younger one."

### C. From Antiochos (Author of the *Pandects*)

If the Lord satisfied the request of the demons, that He not cast them into the abyss, how much more will He heed us, who have, by way of Holy Baptism, put on Christ?

Indeed, He will fulfill our request, when we ask to be freed from spiritual death. For that reason, let us pray continually, for the power of prayer is great.

**D. From Abba Mark**

1. He who struggles to attain to a measure of perfection ought not limit his prayer to specific hours or a specific time, but should pray ceaselessly, except when there is some serious need, or in case of illness; only then should one limit prayer. Continual and unceasing prayer constitutes a commandment from the Lord, Who requires us to pray "day and night."•• And a fundamental recommendation put forth by the Apostle Paul is that we pray "without ceasing" to Almighty God.•••

2. The faithful, through prayer, come to all good things: not only hope in God, but firm faith and love without hypocrisy, the forgetting of wrongs, love of one's brother, self-control and patience, as well as mystical knowledge, liberation from temptation, heartfelt confession, continuous tears, the forbearing of hardships, the sincere forgiveness of the sins of one's neighbor, a knowledge of Divine law, the discovery of God's righteousness, formation in the Holy Spirit, and all those things in general which God has promised to give to those who are faithful, both in this life and the next. All of these things the Christian comes to attain through prayer.

3. In a word, it is not possible for the soul to show forth the "image of God" without the synergy, on the one hand, of Divine Grace and, on the other hand, of a man's faith. For the cultivation of this synergy, there are required great humility, most fervent prayer, and the concentration and captivation of the mind, such that it is not distracted by ephemeral and unfitting matters.

4. Ask God to open up the eyes of your mind, that you might understand, from your own experience, the benefit of prayer and of reading. And prayer is virtue; it can even be characterized as the mother of all of the other virtues, since it gives birth to them, joining the soul to Christ. Whatever we may do that is not the product of prayer and of virtuous hope, it assuredly will be imperfect and will subsequently turn out to be destructive.

5. When the Devil sees that with our spiritual mind we pray to God from the heart, without anything distancing us from Him, he undertakes to upset the mind with traumatic assaults of evil thoughts, even if the slightest of virtues are not subject to destruction by his traumatic temptations and trials.

6. There is no stronger medium than prayer wrought by the success of coöperation between Divine Grace and human effort; and nothing more efficaciously benefits the soul in becoming worthy of the pleasure of God than prayer. It is a thing of beauty to satisfy with words those questions posed from curiosity by lovers of learning. But it is indubitably far superior to reach such a point, through virtue and prayer, that one is formed only by interior affirmation and revelation.

Anyone who offers himself to God through virtue and prayer, such a one may, by the same means, help his neighbor.

7. In short, if you wish to benefit one who loves learning, turn him to prayer, correct faith, and patience with all that we confront in this life. For with these efforts, one can attain to all of the good things of God.

8. It is a good thing to apply that which is above all other commandments and not to pray for particular things needed in this life, but only, as commanded by the Lord, to seek the Kingdom of God.••••

9. If we have not, however, yet come to this spiritual height, wherein we are not concerned with the problems of life, then we are obliged to pray for a Godly solution to these various problems; for to him who is concerned about something and acts without prayer, nothing good comes, in terms of the success which he seeks in a matter. This is also the meaning of the affirmation of the Lord: "[W]ithout Me, ye can do nothing" (St. John 15:5).

* "Clergymen" meant, according to the custom of the time, not only those who were ordained to some Priestly rank, but also Readers and Chanters, Exorcisers [a minor order in the ancient Church—*Trans.*], doorkeepers, and all of the lower orders of persons serving the needs of the Church, down to those who cared for the Church's holdings.

** "Leviticus" is the third book of the Pentateuch of Moses, which is so called because it primarily contains the spiritual and sacerdotal (Levitical) laws of the Jews.

*** Lyko was a city in the Egyptian Thebaid. Near there, on a mountain, Abba John lived as an ascetic, and he was thus nicknamed "Abba John of Lykopolis." The city is today called Assiut.

**** Taking into account that Abba John was living as an ascetic in the fourth century, we can draw the conclusion that the decision in question was that of the Emperor Theodosios the Great, who in fact ordered the destruction of the pagan sanctuaries.

***** The sixth hour corresponds to about our present-day twelve noon and the ninth hour falls around 3:00 p.m.

• "Jesus [Joshua—*Trans.*] said, And let the sun stand over against Gabaon, and the moon over against the valley of Aelon. And the sun and the moon stood still" (Jesus [Joshua] of Navi 10:12-13).

•• "And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, ...crying day and night unto Him" (St. Luke 18:1-2, 7).

••• "Pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:17).

•••• "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (St. Matthew 6:33).

## Hypothesis XI

*That he who asks something from God should not ask for that which he desires, but that which is in his interest, according to the judgment of God.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother was disturbed by evil thoughts and was greatly upset by this. And with great humility, on account of his thoughts, he said: "Woe is me; with such thoughts in my heart, I cannot hope to be saved."

2. Now, one day he visited a great Elder and fervently asked him to pray to God that these evil thoughts might depart from him, and that he might be freed from their weight upon him.

"This is not in your interest, my child," the Elder answered him.

The brother, however, was not persuaded and pressured the Elder to pray for his release from these thoughts.

3. Indeed, the Elder entreated God, Who, hearing his prayer, released the brother from the warfare of his thoughts.

Immediately, however, the brother fell to high-mindedness and pride.

4. Once again, therefore, the brother ran to the Elder, asking him to return to his heart the warfare of his thoughts and the humility which he earlier had.

### B. From St. Isaiah

1. If you pray to God to remove from you some spiritual warfare that disturbs you, and you are not heard, do not become sad of soul, for God knows better than you what it is that is good for your soul. Do not say to God, then, "Take from me, O God, this and give me that," but pray as follows:

2. "Lord Jesus Christ, help me and keep me from sinning, for I have

strayed. Do not allow me to be lost through my sins. Take pity on me, for I am Thy creation; do not ignore me, for I am ill; do not forsake me, for I have sought refuge in Thee. Cure my soul, for I have sinned before Thee. All that I have suffered is found before Thine eyes, and I have no refuge save Thee, my Lord. Lord, save me, by virtue of Thy mercy upon sinners. Let all those who have risen up against my soul and seek my soul, in order to destroy it, come to shame; for Thou, O Lord, art All-Powerful, and through Thee are glorified God the Father and the Holy Spirit unto the ages. Amen."

3. So, then, when you thusly pray with simplicity and humility, your conscience will converse secretly with your heart, in order to inform you for what reason God did not hear your prayer. Thereafter, you will be responsible, if you ignore the directions of your conscience and do not fulfill them.

4. For it is impossible for God not to hear a person, as long as he has first listened to God. God is not far away from man;* it is our personal wills, when not according to God, that do not permit our prayers to be accepted by God.

**C. From St. Barsanouphios**

1. A brother posed the following question to an Elder: "If I ask the Saints to intercede, that God might release me from some bodily or psychic passion, and I believe that I will be immediately cured, what, alas, happens to my faith, if this immediate cure is not to my benefit?"

2. To this question, the Elder answered: "It would be better if one were never to ask, in his prayers, in a demanding way to be released from some passion, for we do not know whether that release will be beneficial or not. Rather, come to prefer the recommendation of the Savior: '[F]or your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him' (St. Matthew 6:8).

3. "So, you should pray in the following manner to God: 'Master, in Thy hands we find ourselves. Have mercy on me as Thou wishest and knowest, and if it is in my interest, cure me shortly of the passion which besets me.'

4. "In the same way, ask the Saints to intercede for you, with the unhesitating conviction that God will bring about that which is beneficial to your soul. In all circumstances, whether He fulfills your petition or not, be thankful to God, in accordance with the Apostolic command: 'In every thing give thanks' (I Thessalonians 5:18). Assuredly, thinking thusly and praying thusly, you will be benefited both in soul and in body."

5. About these things, the brother remarked:
"When the Fathers are asked to pray on account of some temptation, what are they looking for? Release from the passion or the benefit of the soul? And if they are seeking spiritual benefit, then how did Abba Sisoes and other Fathers ask God to release their disciples from temptations?

6. "What are we to think about the saying: 'All things are possible to him that believeth' (St. Mark 9:23), as well as another saying, according to which none will suffer more than he is able to endure?** As well, please explain to me how temptations occur for our benefit and how the prayers of the Saints are beneficial."

7. To these questions, the Elder replied:
"Perfect Fathers pray to God, that God might do that which is beneficial to the soul of a man. If, then, the persistence of a temptation benefits a person, that he might struggle ascetically for patience, it is left in place. And if release from a passion is good for a man, then the temptation is lifted from him. That is a question for the Providence of God.

8. "With regard to Abba Sisoes, to whom you refer, he was informed in advance by Grace to pray for his disciple, and for this reason prayed for his release from passions. In fact, many of the famed Elders were so informed. Whatever happens to a person, it is granted by God for the benefit of his soul, as is also shown by the Apostolic saying: '[I]n every thing give thanks' (I Thessalonians 5:18).

9. "And once again, the saying, '[A]ll things are possible to him that believeth' (St. Mark 9:23), about which you asked me, means this: That we ought to take up the tribulations of the passions with hope, to endure, to be long-suffering, and to take upon ourselves with graciousness all of the trials that may befall us, as did Job. God does not appoint

that a man should be tested beyond what he can endure; and if the prayers of the Saints were not helpful, then man, on account of his languidness, would be in danger of betraying his struggle and his duty."

* "He is not far from every one of us: for in Him we move, and live, and have our being" (Acts of the Apostles 17:27-28).

** "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which ye are able" (I Corinthians 10:13).

## Hypothesis XII

*He who asks of God what is beneficial for his soul must also gladly accept that which is sent by Divine Providence, even if it is opposed to the desire and will of the petitioner.*

### A. From the Life of St. John the Merciful

1. Many of the Christians of the Church of Alexandria sought, from Divine zeal, to apply in their lives the customs of the Apostolic era,* selling their possessions and depositing the money in the hands of St. John (the Merciful), with the request that he distribute it among their poor.

2. Among the Christians who approached the Saint, there also came one who donated, for charitable works, six and a half *litrai* of gold, making sure that he had not kept any for himself. He asked, however, that St. John the Merciful entreat God to grant him two blessings: the first was to save his son from a serious illness, and the second was that his ship might return safely from its trip to Africa.

3. Indeed, the prayer was made to God. However, what happened? After about thirty days, his son died. And the third day after the death of his son, his ship, returning from its voyage, suffered a serious shipwreck, just as it was approaching the Lighthouse of Alexandria, on account of extremely rough seas. Only with great effort were the ship and its passengers saved, while as for the ship's cargo, some was destroyed and some was lost in the sea.

4. Immediately, therefore, following the news of the death of his son, while he was still bearing within him feelings of sorrow, came the news of the damage done to his ship by the turbulent seas. After the news of these two tragedies, this charitable Christian was overcome by immeasurable depression and sadness. And when the Patriarch was informed of these unpleasant events, he was no less saddened than the unfortunate father and hapless shipowner, and he implored God to caress with loving comfort, by His unseen hand, the soul of the troubled and pained Christian, quelling the storm in his soul and bringing him

gladness.

5. The very same night, then, there appeared to the distressed Christian, in a dream, a man resembling the Patriarch, who said to him with sweetness: "Why are you so melancholy and sad? Behold, your son was saved, by the Grace of God, from the evils of life, emerging unpolluted by this world. Had he lived longer, he would not have remained virtuous; he would have changed and become bad, unworthy of the love of his Creator and of his father.

6. "As for the ship, do not be at all sad. Had not God received my humble supplication, all hands would have drowned; thus, aside from the loss of the cargo, you would have lost to a horrible shipwreck both your brother and the rest on board. You must not, therefore, be sad and melancholy, but confront what has happened with patient acceptance, for God does not allow anything to happen without strict and just judgment, even if we may not be able to understand the profound reasons for many of His judgments."

7. Now, as soon as he awakened from the dream, the man felt the deepest comfort in his heart and immediately went to the Patriarch. He fell gratefully at his feet and thanked him with all of the warmth of his soul, relating the revelatory dream which he had seen.

The Patriarch, moved by what he had related, advised him: "You must, my child, give thanks to God, Who arranges all for the benefit of our souls."

**B. From the Life of St. Ouaros**

1. In the age of the Holy Martyrs, there lived a rich woman by the name of Cleopatra. She greatly loved God, and among her other virtues was the love that she had for the Relics of the Holy Martyrs. Now, she was in Egypt, where the Martyr Ouaros** was martyred for Christ. After frightful tortures, the Martyr reposed, being made worthy of a martyric crown, and she took the body of the Martyr, transferring it to her own country, the Palestine. In the meantime, the persecutions against the Christians began to wane and, little by little, peace shone forth in the Church. So, in honor of the Martyr, the pious Cleopatra built a most beautiful Church.

2. This woman had as a sole pillar for her old age, and as her single hope in life, a son, for she had long been widowed. And so she nurtured the noblest hopes for her son. Thus, she sent ample money to the palace authorities, seeking thereby to qualify her son for an official rank in the court. Her request was immediately granted by an official royal decree, certifying that her son would be granted an officer's title and rank. But this pious woman postponed, for the moment, arrangements for bestowing this honor on her son, engaged, as she was, in completing the yet unfinished construction of the Martyr's Church.

3. Having completed the construction of the Church, she called together the Bishops and Presbyters of the Eparchy, in order to perform the Consecration of the Church. As well, she invited to this sacred ceremony the most revered monks. During the performance of the Consecration, the precious Body of the Martyr was transferred to the Church and placed, with great splendor, on a fine bier. On top of the precious Relics of the Martyr—on the bier—there were placed the mantle and belt of a court officer, which had been bestowed on her son, so that they might be blessed by the clergy who were present. After this blessing, the pious mother helped her son to don the insignia of a court officer that had been sent by the king; that is, the mantle and the belt.

4. Subsequently, she attended, along with the crowd of people, a splendid and contrition-filled Vigil, glorifying God and the Martyr. At the end of the Vigil, the mother and her son went up first to the Holy Relics, kissed them with compunction, and, together lifting them up, transferred them to the Holy *Bema* of the Church, where, with proper piety, they were deposited. Cleopatra, who so loved Martyrs, knelt before the sacred Relics and, with fervent tears, beseeched with faith every good thing of the Lord for her son and herself.

5. In the meantime, the Divine Liturgy came to an end. Thereupon, Cleopatra offered to those present a rich and splendid meal. With her son, she put off eating and looked after the worshippers. The young son had been, indeed, commanded by his mother neither to eat nor drink anything until they were through looking after the worshippers.

6. Towards the afternoon, they finished looking after their guests. And the son, exhausted from work, took to his bed and was suddenly overtaken by a high fever. His mother, having eaten nothing, stayed

with her sick son and, without sleeping, did whatever she could to cool down his temperature.

However, despite her efforts and her tragic agony, around midnight—oh, Thine inscrutable judgments, O God!—she saw her son completely exhausted by the illness and, in a few minutes, dead!

7. The moment that she determined that this tragic fact was true, the mother fainted and fell down, unable to utter a word. When, after a short time, she came to, she took her dead son on her shoulders and carried him to the Church that she had built in honor of the Martyr Ouaros. She placed his body in the Holy *Bema* and began to converse with the Holy Relics of the Martyr, as though the Martyr were alive and listening to her. Beside herself, she said to the Martyr with sobs and grief:

8. "Did we sin so much, Martyr of Christ, that we should fall to such a bitter calamity? Did I not, perhaps, abandon the remains of my husband in a foreign place, and did I not arrange with extraordinary care for the transfer of your Relics? Perhaps I did not build from the very foundations a Church in your honor? And if nothing else, did I not offer to you devotion from my soul and my ardent zeal?

9. "And what did I want from all of this? What good did I hope for? What, except for the salvation of my son? And that he should, as I desired, remain close to his mother into old age. Alas, how my hopes have been dashed, how much to the opposite of what I anticipated do I see! O Martyr of Christ!

"So, I now ask from you, Martyr Ouaros, one final favor: either return my son to me alive, as did Elissaios the son of the Shunammite woman,*** or do not deny me a liberating death, so that I, a hapless mother, might depart this world now, along with my son."

10. Weeping and mourning poignantly, Cleopatra slept a little and rested. During this short respite, her son appeared before her, together with the Holy Martyr Ouaros. The holy Athlete of Christ held to her son as though he were his own, and the two were wholly resplendent, dressed in a supernatural manner, two crowns of unfading and incredibly fragrant flowers, such as one would not find on earth, adorning their heads.

11. The Martyr Ouaros, with other-worldly sweetness, said to her:

"Why do you not rejoice, but rather have upset your heart with fearful sadness? Indeed, would I be so ungrateful and so insensitive to all that you offered on my behalf? Are you of the opinion that I would not repay your sacrifices? Do you not see how much your son has been honored? The Grace that is reflected in his face? Why do you not, then, abandon your sorrow and be joyful? If you have any doubt, come near, that you might see even more clearly, with your own eyes, the radiance of your son."

12. Thereupon, the Martyr addressed her son: "Go near to your mother, my child, and let her see how you are, that you might comfort her and stop her tears. Go to her."

However, the young man moved closer to the Martyr and in no way wished to approach his mother, to whom he said: "Mother of mine, go happily and dwell alone. From henceforth do not grieve at all, for I consider such to be the equal of a desire to exchange life for death, unending pleasure for fleeting sadness, and to prefer the ephemeral life over eternity."

13. On hearing this from her son, the pious mother asked the Martyr, once more, to take her, too, along with her son, in order to enjoy the unearthly delight which she had seen.

"It is not yet time," the Martyr told her. "Diligently pursue the path of salvation and you will come here as God wills."

Finally, having blessed her with the peace of God, he departed with her son to the heavenly mansions.

14. The mother, awakening from this apocalyptic dream, warmly thanked God and the Martyr and spent another night in vigil, thanking God. And on the following evening, after the Divine Services, she set out a rich meal for those in attendance at the Vigil.

15. After that, she sold all that she had and distributed the proceeds among the poor. She set aside a paltry garment for herself and dedicated herself to the daily care of the tomb of the Martyr. And she spent her time in prayer and fasting.

So did she cleanse her inner man, that she was found worthy, every Sunday, to see her son and the Martyr in their usual splendor, hence taking a little comfort.

Thus living for seven years, she departed for eternal blessedness.

* "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts of the Apostles 2:44-45). "[F]or as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet" (Acts of the Apostles 4:34-35).

** The Martyr Ouaros [or Varus—*Editors*] was deemed worthy of the crown of Martyrdom in the time of Maximian, in the year 304. (See, regarding his Martyrdom, the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Volume I, first edition, pp. 324-331; second edition, pp. 420-427.) In the account of the Martyrdom of St. Ouaros, there are recorded the particulars of St. Cleopatra, to whom we refer (above), who lived in ascetic holiness after the death of her son.

*** See IV Kings 4:8-37.

## Hypothesis XIII

*Prayer must be strengthened by the performance of good deeds; what things render prayer acceptable to God.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An ascetic Elder was asked if those who requested the prayers of the Fathers were thereby benefited, when the same were negligent with regard to their salvation. To this question, the Elder answered:

"In fact, the Holy Scriptures tell us that, if undertaken as 'effectual fervent' prayer, the 'prayer of a righteous man availeth much' (St. James 5:16). What does this mean? The prayer of the righteous must be aided by the one who asks; and this aid must be a vigilant effort to be preserved, with pain of heart, unharmed by evil acts and tempting thoughts.

2. "As long as a man lives without taking care, he is not benefited at all, even when the Saints pray for him. For, as it is said, what is gained when one person builds and another tears down? The result of such work is fruitless effort."

In order to confirm his view, the Elder told the following story:

3. "There lived in the *cœnobion* a Holy Father, adorned with all of the virtues, but above all humility, leniency towards sinners, empathy for the unfortunate, and love.

4. "Now, this holy man persistently implored God: 'Thou knowest that I am a sinner; but I wish to be saved, thanks to Thy compassions and mercy. I ask Thee, my Master, that out of Thy goodness I not be separated from my *synodeia*, but that all of us who are living the ascetic life together will be found worthy, together, to merit Thy Kingdom, not because we deserve it, but because of Thy goodness.' This prayer he continually offered up to God. Behold, however, how God answered him.

5. "In a neighboring monastery, there occasioned to be celebrated a feast in honor of its patron Saints. The monastery invited the Abbot in question and his disciples. The Abbot at first declined the invitation and

avoided going. But he heard a voice in his sleep: 'Go to the festal celebration to which they called you; but first send your disciples, and only afterwards follow them; and do so alone, without anyone accompanying you.'

"After hearing this apocalyptic voice, he agreed to go.

6. "His disciples having set out, an Angel of the Lord, hidden under the guise of a poor ill man, lay down in the middle of the road to the monastery.

"As the Abbot's disciples approached the place where he was, they saw the ill and poor man crying from his pain. With loving compassion, they asked him:

"'What is wrong, Abba?'

"'I am ill,' he replied, 'and I was riding on an animal and going about my business. The animal bolted and threw me to the ground. And now, finding myself in this condition, I have no one to help me.'

"The monks replied:

"'What can we do for you, Abba? We, too, are on foot and do not have an animal to transport you.'

"So, they left the sick man in this condition and went their way.

7. "After a bit, the Abbot also reached this point. He, likewise encountered the ill man lying on the road, sighing and weeping. After hearing his story, he asked with astonishment: 'Did not a number of monks pass by this place? And did they find you in this condition and yet leave?'

"'Yes, Abba,' the ill man responded, 'and when they heard of my misadventure, they went their way, having told me, "We are on foot, so what can we do for you?"'

8. "The compassionate Abbot asked again: 'Can you perhaps walk a little, so that we can go on?'

"'I cannot, my Elder,' he answered.

"'Let me carry you, then,' the Elder said, 'and God will help us to make our way.'

"'How can you carry me such a distance?' the ill man said. 'Go ahead, and just pray for me.'

"'There is no way I will leave you,' the Elder said. 'But look at that rock over there. I will lift you on top of it and then stoop down, so that you can get on my back.' And so he did just that.

9. "At first, the Abbot felt the natural weight of a man on his shoulders. As he walked, however, carrying the ill man on his shoulders, he felt the weight that he was carrying become lighter. The diminution of the weight that he was carrying prompted him to question the ill man. But his question turned to amazement, when he suddenly saw that the strange sick man had disappeared.

10. "Amazed, he then heard a voice, which said to him: 'Though you constantly entreat me on behalf of your disciples, that they be made worthy, along with you, to enjoy the Kingdom of Heaven, see for yourself that the measure of your virtue is one thing, while that of your disciples is another. Push them, then, to do good, as you do, and then your entreaty will surely be fulfilled, for I am a Righteous Judge, giving to each one according to his deeds.'"

11. A brother once visited an ascetic Elder who dwelled at the Lavra of Souka [also know as the Old Lavra of St. Chariton—*Trans.*], opposite Jericho. After exchanging a brotherly kiss, the brother said to him:

"How are you, Father?"

"I am not well," replied the Elder.

"Why, my Abba?" the brother asked.

"Listen," the Elder said, "I have at every moment stood praying before God, continually, for over thirty years. However, at times I curse myself, because I say to God: '[B]e not merciful to any that work iniquity' (Psalm 58:6); at other times, I say: '[C]ursed are they that do err from thy commandments' (Psalm 118:21); and yet, I go astray and practice iniquity.

12. "Still at other times I say to God, '[D]estroy all them that speak falsehood' (Psalm 5:7), yet I lie each day. Though my heart is infected by evil thoughts, I nonetheless say to God: '[The] meditations of my heart shall ever be pleasing before thee' (Psalm 18:15). Without fasting, I say, '[M]y knees are weak through fasting' (Psalm 108:24). And while I implore God, saying, 'And forgive me my trespasses, as I forgive those who trespass against me' (St. Matthew 6:12), I nonetheless entertain enmity against my brother.

13. "Though I eagerly take time to eat my bread, nonetheless I say, 'I forgat to eat my bread' (Psalm 101:5). Though I sleep until morning, I falsely chant: '[A]t midnight I rose to give thanks unto thee' (Psalm

118:62). Without feeling any compunction, I have the gall to say: 'I am become weary with my groaning' (Psalm 6:7), and 'My tears have been my bread day and night' (Psalm 41:4).

14. "Filled with pride and fleshly comfort, I deceive myself, chanting: 'Look upon my lowliness and my toil, and forgive all my sins' (Psalm 24:18). Unprepared for every spiritual undertaking, I chant: 'My heart, O God, is ready' (Psalm 56:8). And in general, not to be wordy, all of my spiritual work and my prayer are for me a test and a shame, because of their unlawfulness."

15. In reply to this, the brother said: "My Father, do you not think that the Prophet David was actually saying all of this about himself?"

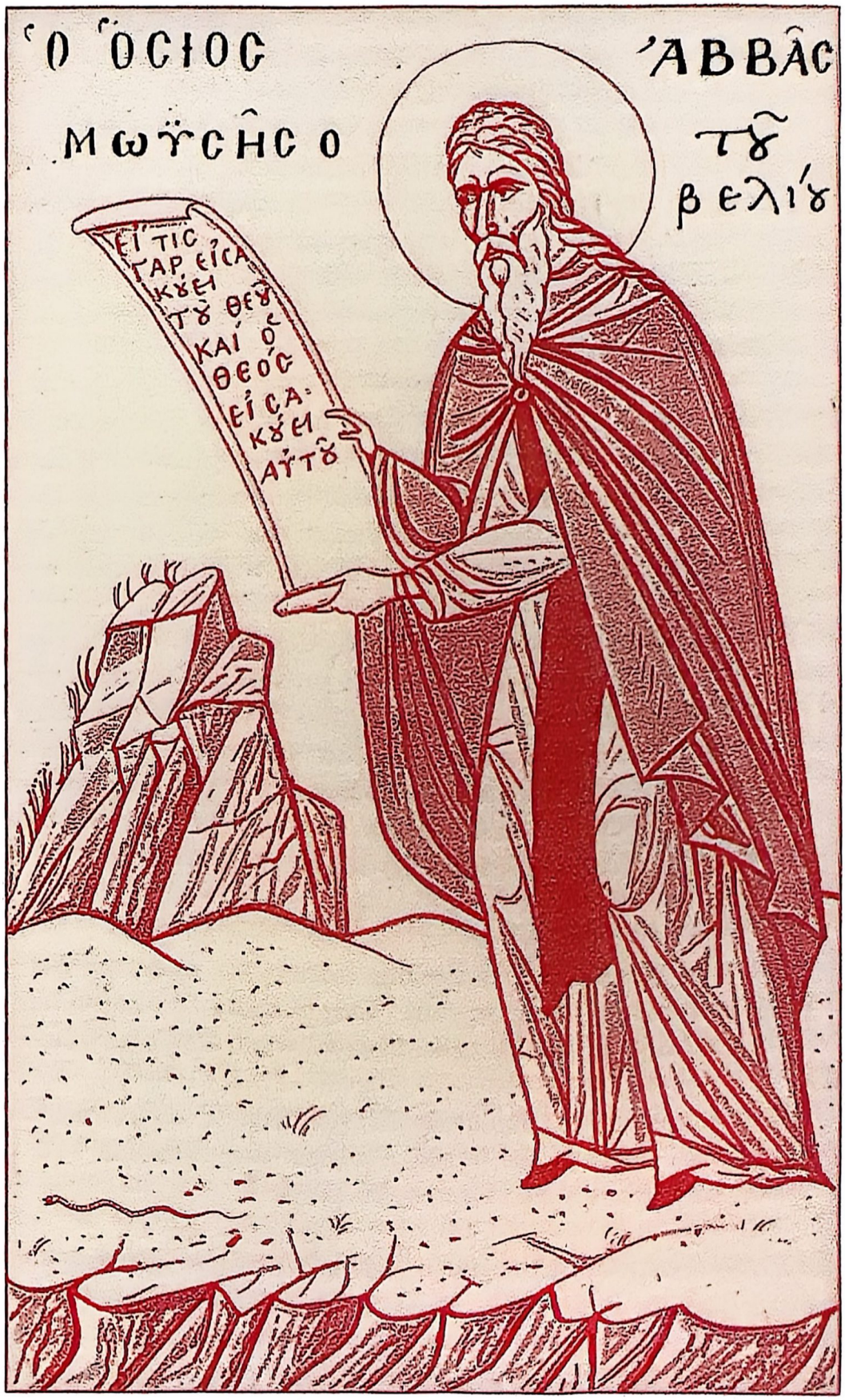
Sighing, the Elder answered: "What are you saying, my brother? If we do not attempt to apply to ourselves all that we chant to God, assuredly we will not be granted His mercy and will be damned."

16. An ascetic Elder said that in Sketis there lived a monk. He performed with perfection and exactitude his prayers and services. He was, however, negligent in the rest of his duties. Now, one day Satan appeared to one of the Elders and said to him sarcastically: "You want to know something strange? There is a certain monk who keeps me under his arm, so that I cannot flee from him and so that I can do all that I wish. Nonetheless, at every hour he says to God, 'Lord, deliver me from the Evil One.'"

17. Abba Moses said: "If what one does is not in agreement with one's prayer, then one labors in vain." One of those who heard him say this asked: "What is meant by agreement between action (practice) and prayer?"

The Elder answered: "To succeed in not doing that from which we pray to God for deliverance. When a person abandons his will, then God converses with him and accepts his prayer."

18. Abba Moses of Belios [most probably an error in transcription, the reference here is properly to Abba Mios of Belos—*Editors*] said: "Obedience [*ὑπακοή—Trans.*] is analogous with obedience [*ὑπακοῆς—Trans.*]. That is, if one heeds [*εἰσακούει—Trans.*] God, God heeds [*εἰσακούει—Trans.*] his prayer." [The language of this aphorism is very subtle. It has been widely translated, "Obedience responds to obedience. If one




*Righteous Abba Moses of Belios*

obeys God, then God obeys his prayer." The rendering here corresponds better to the nuanced meaning of the original Greek—*Trans.*]

19. Abba Isaiah said: "When you do your services and recite your prayers, feel humble, to the point that you are sure that you are unworthy; only then will your prayers have the power to reach God.

"However, if at the hour that you keep vigil at a service, you nonetheless call to mind someone who fell asleep, or who did not attend to his duties, and criticize him, then your labor has been for naught."

20. Again, the same Abba said: "He who requests something of God, doing so with knowledge of his inner thoughts, such a one God will hear. If one knows well what he is asking, and is not occupied with some worldly and vain thing, but always attends, with fear of God, to his soul, that it might appear unimpeded before the fearful Judgment Seat of Christ (at least to the extent that such is within his power), him, too, God will hear."

**B. From St. Barsanouphios**

1. A brother asked an Elder: "Does the faith of one man have the power to benefit another, as in the case of the paralytic, who benefited from the faith of those who carried him?"

2. The Elder replied: "Take note: Had the paralytic not had faith, he would not have allowed them to carry him, let alone to suffer being lowered down from the roof. Rather, all worked together with faith. If a man does not offer his own faith to God, in no way can he benefit from the faith of others.

3. "Now, do not take advantage of the faith of others, who are worthy, lest you throw on their shoulders the burden of praying, while you make no effort whatever. Take as an example the Prophet Jeremiah, who believed that God would have mercy on the people and prayed for them. However, since the people did not show the same trust in God, God did not heed the prayer of the Prophet. Did the Prophet not, in fact, have the same faith as those who carried the paralytic? This point is upheld in all similar circumstances."

4. Thereupon, the brother posed the following question: "I beseech

you, Father, in what way did faithful synergy play a role in the healing of the daughter of the Canaanite woman (St. Matthew 15:21-28) and the servant of the Centurion (St. Matthew 8:5-13)? In addition, how are we to explain the fact that another paralytic, while he asked Christ for bodily health, was first given the forgiveness of his sins? Where, indeed, is the synergy in faith of those in these instances? Moreover, please explain to me what the meaning is of the statements of the Lord to His Disciples—'Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth will be bound in heaven' (St. Matthew 18:18) and '[W]hose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them' (St. John 20:23)—without adding, 'as long as they coöperate in faith.' I implore you, then, to explain to me these matters."

5. To these inquiries, the Elder replied: "My brother, only those who do not see things in depth are upset and ask about these matters. The daughter of the Canaanite woman and the servant of the Centurion were out of their minds; the first as a result of madness, the second from the dangerous effects of a life-threatening illness. Thus, since their logical faculties were inoperative, it was impossible for them to coöperate in faith and thus to aid those who were praying for them.

6. "The paralytic, once more, offered his faith to Christ in order to gain his bodily health. Out of His love for man, however, the Master granted him the greatest gift of Grace, that of the forgiveness of his sins.

"And with special regard to the Savior, the following applies: The Savior performed miracles and healed the sick without the synergy of faith of those asking for such, so that people might believe immediately from the outset that the Redeemer had come. Thus there was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah about the Savior: 'He took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses' (St. Matthew 8:17).*

7. "In this case, the healing of the sick took place through the power of the Grace of Christ, without any question of the need for their synergy in faith. Only after such healing was it asked of them to maintain the commandments of the Faith, in accordance with what the Savior said to the paralytic whom He had healed: 'Behold thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee' (St. John 5:14).

8. "This was foreseen prophetically by St. John the Forerunner in an ecstatic state: '[B]ehold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world' (St. John 1:29).

"And those who, whether before or after such things, do not accept Christ by faith are not healed. In this sense, we can apply the Apostolic maxim: 'But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart' (I Corinthians 7:15).

9. "With regard to the Apostles, one should know this: They were given the authority to heal diseases and to forgive sins, though with the spiritual coöperation (synergy of faith) from those in need. About this, let us be persuaded by one who received such authority. The Apostle James says: 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much' (St. James 5:16). To the Savior, though, this does not apply. Any who accept Him through faith receive His healing and are saved, while those who reject Him are lost.

10. "Let us be, then, fixed in faith, and we will then surely be saved, with the help of God, calling upon His name."

* "He beareth our sins, and is pained for us" (Isaiah 53:4).

## Hypothesis XIV

*Our prayer is not acceptable when we have enmity against another, or when others have enmity against us and we do not take care to reconcile with them.*

### A. From the Life of St. John the Merciful

1. St. John the Great (the Merciful), Patriarch of Alexandria, once punished two clergymen who had become enemies—the one with the other—with a harsh penance. One of them gladly accepted the penance, since he understood his culpability and wanted to correct himself; the other one, however, remained indifferent and took this as an excuse, on account of his spiritual laziness, to be completely negligent with regard to Church gatherings, prayer, and the various religious duties of a cleric. Therefore, he attended only to the satisfaction of his various wants and, moreover, risked playing on the Saint's goodness.

2. As soon as the Saint saw the dangerous spiritual condition of the latter, he thought that perhaps the Devil had completely won him over; so, he decided to summon him to demand an apology. By the Providence of God, however, in order to demonstrate the incomparable majesty of the Saint's humility and his exceeding sympathy for the sinner, St. John shortly forgot his intention.

3. The Sunday after the Saint had made his decision to summon the clergyman, he was celebrating the Divine Mystery of the Holy Eucharist inside the Holy Altar.

Exactly at the moment that the sacred coverings are removed from the Holy Gifts, he remembered the hateful cleric. At the same time that he remembered him, there came to his mind the command of the Master, which requires that we first forgive our enemies and be reconciled to them, and only then offer our gift on the Altar of Sacrifice (St. Matthew 5:23-24). Immediately, therefore, he ordered the Deacon to repeat the augmented litany over and over, until he returned to the Holy Altar. And he, using the excuse that his stomach was hurting, sneaked out of the Altar, without being noticed, and asked someone to bring to

him, as quickly as possible, the hateful cleric.

4. Indeed, within a short time, the cleric came. There occurred, thereupon, an extremely amazing incident. The Patriarch, without the slightest embarrassment before those who were looking at them, fell down at the feet of the cleric and asked his forgiveness. On seeing this sight—the extreme humility of the Patriarch—the cleric, until this moment insensitive, seeing this holy man kneeling before him, conquered the resistance in his soul and, fearing fire from on high and the chastisement of God, also fell prostrate and asked forgiveness.

5. St. John then drew the cleric close to him, and together they entered the Holy Altar with indescribable gladness and delight. He then said to God with courage and peace of soul: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (St. Matthew 6:12). After this incident, that cleric became so chastened and humble that he was judged worthy by the Patriarch himself to be ordained a Presbyter.

**B. From the *Gerontikon***

1. The Fathers have said: "The mirror of the monastic is prayer. Just as it is impossible for one to see himself in muddy water," they have further said, "so it is impossible, too, for the soul which is not cleansed of evil thoughts and passions to pray to God."

2. An ascetic Elder said: "When a man takes care not to wrong his neighbor, then he may be sure that his prayer will be heard by God. If, however, one wrongs his neighbor, then his prayer is repugnant and God does not accept it, for the groans of one falsely accused do not allow the prayers of a false accuser to rise up before God."

3. Again, the same Elder said: "If you are told that someone has insulted you, and he should visit you, take care not to show him that you have learned this. Instead, show great joy before him, with a smiling face and a thankful demeanor. Only then will your prayer have boldness before God."

4. Abba Moses said: "If a man does not reflect continuously on the fact that he is a sinner, God will not hear his prayer; for he who thinks unceasingly of the weight of his sins does not observe the sins of his

neighbor."

5. Abba Zeno said: "He who wants God to hear his prayer immediately upon raising his hands up in entreaty must first, with all of his heart, pray for his enemies; then only will he be heard, if he should ask something of God."

6. Several of the Fathers have related the following didactic story: When the Clergy celebrated the Divine Liturgy at Sketis, at the time of the offertory an eagle would descend on the Holy Table. This eagle was not a material, enhypostatic bird, but a representation of Divine Grace, and no one, except the liturgizing clergy, saw it.

7. Now, one day, a brother asked something of the Deacon. The Deacon, however, was not eager to serve him: "I do not have time just now," he told the brother.

After this refusal, the Deacon went to celebrate the Liturgy, together with the Presbyter. However, the eagle—the representation of Divine Grace—did not descend as usual.

"Why did the eagle not descend as usual today?" the Presbyter asked the Deacon. "Certainly it is some sin of mine or some sin of yours," he continued, "that impeded the descent of Divine Grace. Move away from me for a moment, and if it descends, then assuredly the reason will rest on you."

8. And indeed, after the Deacon had distanced himself, the eagle descended. When the Divine Liturgy had finished, and the Presbyter and the Deacon were alone, the former asked the latter: "Tell me, what did you do?"

"My conscience does not tell me that I have done anything," the Deacon replied. "The only thing is that when some brother asked me to do something for him, I told him that it was not a good time."

Then the Presbyter replied: "Because of you, then, the eagle did not descend, for you grieved a brother who came to you."

Immediately, the Deacon went and asked forgiveness of the brother.

### C. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

1. My brother, let us flee the fearful and destructive passion of enmity, that we be not estranged from a free and bold account before God;

for it is not possible for one who suffers from this frightful passion to appear, in pure prayer, before God.

2. Bold communion with the Lord is thereby impeded, as He Himself says: "...If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother" (St. Matthew 5:23-24).

Just as an upright and virtuous man distances himself from places of ill repute, so God is distant from the soul of a hateful person. Just as smoke bothers and torments one's eyes, so enmity annoys the mind of a person at the time of prayer.

**D. From St. Isaiah**

1. Do not make an enemy of any man whatsoever, for your prayer will not be acceptable to God. Be peaceable with all, so as to gain boldness before God when you pray. Do not forget that the Lord says in the Gospel: "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (St. Matthew 6:14-15).

2. Indeed, these words of the Lord are fearful, for they say that, if you do not see to it that your heart is pure, then ask nothing of God. If, despite this, with a heart burdened with enmity, you should ask something of God, it is as though you were insulting Him; for even though you are a sinner and have caused sadness for your fellow man, you say to Him, Who knows the depths of your heart, "Forgive me my sins."

3. As such, you are not praying from the depth of your soul, with your mind, but simply with your lips, being in great ignorance. God does not hear one who prays thusly. Rather, your prayer is not actual prayer, but simply a typical habit of yours at the appointed times of prayer.

4. He who wishes to pray to God from the depth of his mind, that his prayer might be true and genuine, emanating from a pure heart and inspired by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, is obliged first to examine his mind and what thoughts he holds therein, such that, when he says to God, "Have mercy on me," he has first had mercy on any who have

harmed him; and when he says to God, "Forgive me," to have forgiven his fellow man, who shares his passions. When one says to God, "Remember not the sins which I have committed, whether involuntary or voluntary," neither should he remember the transgressions of his neighbor against him.

5. Because, inasmuch as we are all held captive by the force of sin, we must not hold anything against any person whatever.

6. If, then, you have not reached the point that you can do this, you are praying vainly, my brother, since God, in keeping with the teaching of Scripture, does not hear you. God has, indeed, shown all of His love to you, so that what you wish Him to do for you, you might first do for your fellow man. To the extent that you show forbearance to your fellow man, to an equal extent God will also free you from the various needs that enslave you. God is in the correctness of how one lives, and not simply in the words of one's tongue.

7. In the hands of every man, then, lies the authority to bind himself to the fire of Gehenna or to free himself; for there is nothing stronger than the will, whether it inclines one towards death or towards life. Happy and blessed are those who have loved eternal life and who desire it above all, for nothing shall topple them.

## Hypothesis XV

*It is necessary for a faithful Christian to read Holy Scripture; and great is the benefit therefrom.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder said: The Prophets wrote inspired books; our Fathers applied in their lives the advice in these books. Those who have, out of reverence, followed our Fathers took them to heart. But in our own generation, they have been copied in fancy manuscripts and placed in libraries, without their being used for the benefit of the soul.

2. An Elder was asked: "Is it a good thing to read Holy Scripture?"
The Elder replied: "The sheep receives from the shepherd good grass for eating; however, the sheep also eats dried leaves and other things—without essential nutrients—from barren and fallow places. Now, when his stomach is upset from eating thistle, he chews the cud of the good grassy food, and his stomach recovers and dispels the upsetting mix of the thistle. Thus it is with a man: the reading of the Holy Scriptures overcomes the contrivance of the demons."

3. Another Elder said: "Those animals which chew their cud and have cloven hooves are clean. So we, who have rightly believed and who accept the two Testaments, Old and New, have need, on the one hand, to ruminate on beneficial food, but not, on the other hand, food that is bad and harmful. Now, beneficial food is the food of good thoughts, which are formed in our soul by the traditions of our Holy Teachers and by the study of Holy Scriptures. With these thoughts the God-loving soul must be unceasingly occupied, studying them continually. Food that is unwholesome is that of unclean thoughts, with which the Evil One maliciously assails us and from which we must distance ourselves, remaining not even for a moment under their influence."

4. A clairvoyant Elder said: I once knew a brother who studied Holy Scripture in his cell with care and with piety. During the time that he was studying, the Devil did not have the power to enter into his cell.

He came in and warred against him, however, the moment that he stopped his study.

**B. From St. Ephraim**

1. My brother, take care with all of your heart, when you study Holy Scripture, to drink with eagerness of the sweet richness which comes forth from such study with the same thankfulness of soul that a baby has when feeding from its mother's breast. From the study of Holy Scripture, you will gain knowledge of the feats of the virtues, and thus your heart will be filled with joy and gladness.

2. If the investigators of the writings of the wise of this world study with great care the non-existent wisdom of this world—for the wisdom of the present world "is foolishness with God" (I Corinthians 3:19)—with so much greater enthusiasm must we study and take to heart the words of God, for the salvation of our souls; and this the Holy Spirit inspires and blesses in those who research "His testimonies" (Psalm 118:2), for such seek with their whole hearts after God.

3. Is there anyone more perverse than he who has sweet and delicious water at hand, yet does not water his thirsty soul? Moreover, is there any man more covetous than he who has beneficial books and does not give them to his brother for his spiritual upbuilding? And can you think of any man more lazy than he who, though thirsty, sits next to a rich well, yet does not reach out his hand to take water to satisfy his thirst? Is there any man more unproductive and spiritually indifferent than one who has, or who acquires, a religious book but nonetheless does not take care to study it?

4. My brother, labor with him who asks you to learn to read, that he might be able to study the splendors of God, and thus you will bless His majestic name. And be assured that God will repay you for this labor of yours.

**C. From Abba Mark**

Ask God to open up the eyes of your heart, that you might understand, from your own experience, the benefit of prayer and of reading.

**D. From St. Isaac**

1. Study ceaselessly and without satiation the books of the sacred Teachers about the Providence of God, for in this way your spiritual mind will be led to understand the marvellous order of the creations of God and to know His works. Thus will your mind be strengthened and form, through the profundity of study, ideas and thoughts which shine forth with light. Finally, the study of the books of the sacred Teachers helps the spiritual mind to proceed with spiritual purity to the deep knowledge of the creations of God.

2. When you study, take care to be at peace in all ways and to free yourself from the assault of daily cares and from perturbation, which create in your soul the various concerns of this life. Only then will you be able to enjoy in your soul the most sweet taste that derives from the cherished spiritual delight of understanding what you are reading. The soul will sense the deepest meaning of what you are reading and, such being imprinted solidly thereon, you will delight in it.

3. Revere the writings and the teachings of true authors and do not consider their works to be like those which have only external worth and which ignore Divine words, that you might not remain blind until the end of your life and be deprived of their God-pleasing gain.

4. Devote yourself to the reading of the Divine Scriptures, which reveal to a person the path to the most vivid vision of Divine majesty, even if you do not immediately taste of the sweetness of their thoughts, since your mind has not yet been cleansed and has not distanced itself from material things.

5. And when you rise up to perform your rule of prayer, instead of your mind being occupied with all that you have seen and heard, dwell in the deepest knowledge of the thoughts about which you read in Divine Scripture, and do not bring to mind concerns about worldly things. Thereby, your mind will begin to be cleansed; and such is the meaning of the ecclesiastical maxim: "The soul which stands in prayer is benefited by reading and, again, is enlightened by prayer in reading."

In this instance, reading, as we have said, rather than occupying our mind with worldly materialism, is reified (rendered material) through the manner in which we pray.

6. Until one receives the Paraclete in his heart, he has need of Holy Scripture, that the remembrance of virtuous things might be imprinted on his heart and so that, by way of continuous reading, there is renewed within him a movement and inclination towards the good. Therein, you should also protect your soul from the indiscernible pathways of sin, since you have not yet acquired the power of the Holy Spirit to distance from your mind the forgetfulness (of God) which extinguishes those desires beneficial to the soul and coerces the mind to be scattered and to be led astray by fruitless things.

7. For when this power of the Holy Spirit finally endows one with that power of soul which acts with the help of the Spirit, then there takes root in his heart the commands of the Spirit, rather than the laws of Scripture, and thus a man is given knowledge mystically by the Spirit, without having the need of sensory material, in the work of his spiritual upbuilding.

8. Moreover, when teaching comes forth directly from the Energy of the Spirit, then the remembrance of virtue is assuredly maintained.

## Hypothesis XVI

*That which we read we must also put into action; for salvation is achieved by deeds, not by words. For this reason, knowledge alone is of no benefit. The spiritual person should not limit himself to the words of a text, but rather seek to understand their higher meaning and spirit.*

### A. From Abba Isaiah

1. If a person acquires a utensil but cannot find it when he needs it, in vain has he acquired it.

2. It is precisely the same thing with a person who says: "I fear God and know the Scriptures," but who does not act with fear of God at a time of need.

Indeed, such a man, in moments of anger, or when speaking with boldness, or when instructing another regarding that of which he has no experience, or when acting with a desire to be pleasing to others, or while in the heat of any other passion, does not conduct himself with fear of God in his thoughts and actions.

3. If, then, this person does not find fear of God in such circumstances, in vain does he glory in his knowledge of Divine Scriptures.

### B. From Abba Mark

1. When a humble-minded person who occupies himself with spiritual works reads Divine Scriptures, he applies everything to himself and not to others. The writs of Holy Scripture have not been composed merely for us to understand them, but also that we might put them into practice.

2. Some have believed that Holy Scripture is a mere compilation of dry concepts, irrelevant to life. For this reason, having acquired books and committed to memory the sense of what is written—without, however, putting any of these things into practice in their lives—they take pride in supposedly knowing the concepts contained therein and flaunt

themselves by speaking and commenting on Holy Scripture. Such people, even though they have not labored in the least to put into practice the teachings of Holy Scripture, and despite the fact that they give no thought to the *actual task* of one who studies it, are greatly exalted by those without experience of Godly philosophy.

3. Such as these are contemptible before God, and the devout Fathers also condemn them; for they have acquired knowledge leading to an understanding of Holy Scripture, not so as to put it into practice, but rather in order to display themselves egotistically before men as wise interpreters, and have thus been deprived of lofty spiritual knowledge, which takes shape in the heart by the action of the Holy Spirit. Such ones, according to Holy Scripture, glory not in the heart, but in appearance [*cf.* II Corinthians 5:12—*Trans.*] and are justly rejected by Holy Scripture, which says: "Trust in God with all thine heart, and be not exalted in thine own wisdom" (Proverbs 3:5).

4. Watch, that your heart does not become conceited on account of mere interpretations of Scriptural concepts, lest your mind fall into a spirit of blasphemy. When reading Holy Scriptures, try to grasp the deeper meaning; for "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Romans 15:4). Take care to study the words of Holy Scripture so that, by means of them, you might order your actions in a Godly manner; and do not ramble on about lofty thoughts and metaphysical concepts, for therein lies the danger of being swelled up with pride.

5. He who abandons practice (*praxis*), relying on bare knowledge alone, bears a staff made of reed instead of a two-edged sword. As Holy Scripture says, this staff, in time of war, will pierce his hand, and the poison that the reed contains by nature will enter his wound, even before his enemies are able to do him harm.*

6. All those who, on account of their supposed struggles, pride themselves above the more negligent wrongly believe that they will be justified by bodily works. As for those who boast in their lofty theological knowledge, while humiliating those who have none, such as these are surely more foolish than the first.

7. Without the deeds with which knowledge must accord, knowl-

edge has no validity, even if it is genuine; for in every circumstance, only deeds lend validity to the mind-set and dispositions of man. In many instances, negligence in performing necessary actions clouds this knowledge itself, for from the souls of those whose works have deviated from the right path, remembrance of the good will also, to an extent, assuredly depart.

8. Wisdom is not merely knowledge of truth gained by an examination of the natural relationship between things and concepts, but also a person's strength to endure the wickedness of those who wrong him as though it were a matter of his own wickedness.

Those who have remained in the first state of wisdom ("theoretical" wisdom, so to speak) have been overcome by pride; but as many as have arrived at the second stage of wisdom ("practical" wisdom) have acquired humility of mind.

**C. From the *Gerontikon***

1. An Elder said: There are those who waste their days in negligence and indifference. Although they ask to be saved in word and thought, nevertheless they undertake no real effort. Such as these read the Lives of the Holy Fathers, yet do not imitate the Fathers' humility, lack of possessions, temperance, vigils, prayers, prostrations, sleeping on the ground, silence, or any other of their ascetic practices.

2. On the contrary, by their pride and negligence, they contradict the Lives of the Fathers and, by way of justification, say that such things are impossible for a person to endure. They do not consider that where God shall abide through the Grace of Baptism and the works of the commandments, there supernatural events and spiritual gifts can come to fruition.

**D. From St. Maximos**

1. The Grace of the New Testament is mystically concealed in the pages of the Old Testament. This is why the Apostle says that the law is spiritual. Thus, the law (of the Old Testament and the Prophets), as regards its external, literal formulation, is grown old, having been abolished (by the new Grace and the New Testament). As regards the spirit of the law, however (that is, its preternatural element), it remains eter-

nally new and, as such, a continual source of spiritual energy. For the Grace of God, manifested to men through the law, never grows old.

2. We are of the opinion that all of Holy Scripture can be characterized as flesh and spirit; thus, he who says that the words of Holy Scripture are flesh and the meaning of these words spirit (that is, the soul of Holy Scripture) has assuredly expressed the truth. And undeniably wise is he who passes over appearances—that is, the word and dry letter—and turns his full attention to the everlasting element of Holy Scripture, that is, the spirit.

3. The greatest interpreters of the Divine Scriptures regard the teaching concerning the Lord as having two forms. The first is the common, popular one, which many see, whereby the Lord "hath no form or comeliness" (Isaiah 53:2). The other form is the more mystical one, accessible to only a few, who have been elevated to the level of the Grace of the Holy Apostles, and especially that of Peter, James, and John, before whom the Lord was Transfigured. This marvellous form overcomes the power of the senses and illuminates the soul by the light and glory of the Lord. According to this form, the Lord is revealed as being "more comely in beauty than the sons of men" (Psalm 44:3).

4. Of these two forms, the first conforms to the spiritual state of novices in the spiritual life. The second form is proper to those who have been perfected (as far as such is possible) in mystical knowledge and who have thus achieved their supreme desire to behold the Glory of the Lord and to live therein.

5. The first form is a symbolic image of the first coming of the Lord to earth, which, by means of the sufferings of the Lord, effected the purification of the souls of those practicing asceticism and virtue.

6. The second form is an image and prototype of the second and glorious Coming of the Lord. This form, through wisdom from on high, leads those initiated into lofty knowledge to deification, in the manner and measure of the participation of the Holy Apostles in the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor, during which they saw, as in a mirror and with uncovered faces, the Glory of God in the Person of the Transfigured Word. The first form constitutes the external history of events and is the flesh of the Gospel; the second constitutes the spirit of the Gospel.

7. When the Word of God is radiantly and gloriously revealed in our souls, and His face shines like the sun, then His garments also appear white. What are these garments? These are the words of the Sacred Gospels, which we comprehend by means of inner Divine illumination, there no longer being any shadowy or incomprehensible elements therein contained. Moses and Elias—that is, the most spiritual men among the law and the Prophets—attained to this Divine alteration of soul, which resembles the Transfiguration.

**E. From the *Gerontikon***

1. The spiritual Elders said that God demands the following things of Christians: That they submit themselves to the Divine Scriptures, for the Will of God is thereby expressed; that they attend to putting into practice the things they read in the Divine Scriptures; and finally, that they obey their leaders and spiritual Fathers.

2. Abba Ammoun, who lived in asceticism in Rhaïthou, asked Abba Sisoes:

"When I read a holy book, my thoughts urge me to compose a fine discourse, that I might have it as a reply when I am questioned. What should I do?"

Abba Sisoes answered:

"There is no need for you to occupy yourself with such things. Rather, struggle that, by means of the purity of your mind, you might acquire spiritual calmness and tranquility from on high; and also wisdom from on high, that you might speak and answer in a soul-profiting way."

**F. From St. Ephraim**

My brother, do you call yourself spiritually knowledgeable? Reckon from your deeds whether such is true. For precisely as the body without the soul is dead, so also bare knowledge, without analogous spiritual deeds, is dead and without benefit. If it is an error for a Christian not to know Scripture, then it is a twofold error for him to know Scripture but disregard it, failing to put its teachings into practice in his life.

**G. From St. Isaac**

Do not venture to understand the teaching of the mysteries and dogmas of Holy Scripture by means of simple reading, without first praying and seeking God's help, saying: "O Lord, grant me the ability to understand the spiritual power contained herein." Always keep in mind that prayer before reading is the key to the true concepts sheltered in the letter of Divine Scriptures.

* See IV Kings 18:21, Isaiah 36:6, and Ezekiel 29:6-7.

## Hypothesis XVII

*We must not, moved by pride, greatly pry into the lofty meaning of Scripture or dogmatic matters that surpass human reason; nor should we try to comprehend the judgments of God.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Several brothers once visited Abba Zeno [or Zenon, in Greek—*Trans.*] and posed to him the following question:

"What is the meaning, Abba, of that which is written in the book of Job: 'Yea, Heaven is not clean in His sight' (Job 15:15)?"

2. The Elder replied:

"Men have stopped concerning themselves with being delivered from their sins and, instead, occupy themselves with searching the heavens. The interpretation of the saying is this: 'Only God is pure.' This is why Scripture says that Heaven is not clean before God."

3. A brother from Egypt went to a foreign place on a certain matter, staying as the guest of an anchorite distinguished for his love, who offered hospitality to many. During their conversation, the brother spoke to the anchorite about Abba Poimen. When the anchorite heard what was said, he desired to make the Abba's acquaintance.

4. A short while after the brother had returned to his native land, the anchorite went to Egypt to see him. The brother gave him hospitality and led him to Abba Poimen. At initially entering into Abba Poimen's cell, the brother told him about the anchorite: that he was an earnest person, that he was loved and honored in his country, and so on. After this introduction, Abba Poimen received the anchorite with joy and, having exchanged a fraternal kiss, they sat down.

5. The anchorite then began to speak from Holy Scripture regarding spiritual and heavenly matters. While the anchorite was speaking, the Elder turned his head away and gave him no answer at all. Having waited quite some time without the Elder's saying so much as a word

*Righteous Abba Zeno*

to him, the anchorite was grieved and left the cell, telling the brother who had led him to the place:

"In vain did I make this whole journey; for I came to the Elder and he does not want to speak with me."

6. Distressed, the brother reëntered the cell and said to Abba Poimen:

"Abba, I emphasized to you that this earnest person came for your sake. Why, then, will you not speak with him?"

"My child," answered the Elder, "the anchorite is from among those remarkable people who speak of heavenly things. I, on the other hand, am one of the lowly, and therefore speak of earthly things. So if he were to speak to me regarding the passions of the soul, I could answer him. But I know nothing of the spiritual things about which he spoke, since they are lofty."

7. After this explanation, the brother exited and said to the anchorite:

"The Elder does not easily discuss matters of Scripture. When asked about passions of the soul, however, he answers readily."

Hearing this from the brother, the anchorite was brought to contrition and, entering the Elder's cell a second time, asked him with humility:

"What should I do, Abba, because I am dominated by the passions of the soul?"

8. The Elder replied with enthusiasm:

"Now you have come as you should. Speak to me about such matters and I will fill you with the good things of the spirit."

Thus, indeed, a long and beneficial conversation commenced between the two of them regarding the passions of the soul and how one is to deal with them. At the end of this conversation, the anchorite, having been tremendously pleased and edified by it, said:

"This is indeed the true way, and I thank God for vouchsafing me to meet such a Saint." Thus gratified, he returned to his homeland.

9. An Elder said: If a brother, while sitting in his cell, recalls a saying from Holy Scripture and attempts on his own to interpret it by turning it over in his thoughts without, however, having reached a measure of perfection or having been drawn in by the love of God, he runs a great risk. The demons present the saying to him as they wish it to be

understood, thereby either throwing him into heresy or into exceeding pride.

10. Someone besought Abba Sosipatros:
"Abba, give me a commandment so that I may put it into practice in my monastic life."
And Abba Sosipatros answered:
"Be careful not to let a woman enter your cell, and do not ever read apocryphal books."

11. Abba Anthony, musing upon the depths of the judgments of God with awe, besought God to expound on some of his queries.
"Lord," he said, "why do some die at a young age and others in deep old age? Why are some poor and others rich? Why are the unjust rich and happy, whereas the just hunger and suffer?"

12. A voice then came to him, saying:
"Anthony, watch yourself; for such things are the impenetrable judgments of God and it is not to your spiritual advantage to preoccupy yourself therewith."

13. Some ascetic Elders once visited Abba Anthony, and with them was Abba Joseph. Wishing to test them, Abba Anthony gave them a phrase from Holy Scripture and proceeded to ask them—beginning with the younger monks and proceeding to the older ones—the meaning of the phrase. Each answered differently, according to his spiritual ability. To each, the Elder replied: "You have not yet found its meaning."

14. Last of all, he addressed Abba Joseph:
"As for you, how do you interpret this phrase, Abba?"
Abba Joseph answered:
"As for me, I do not know."
Abba Anthony then added with enthusiasm:
"Abba Joseph has truly discovered the way of perfection; for he said, 'I do not know.'"

15. Abba Daniel recounted, concerning Abba Arsenios, that he always avoided speaking on matters of Holy Scripture, though he was able to do so, if he so desired; nor did he readily write letters (to all those

seeking answers to questions). When he would come, at long intervals, to the *Katholikon* of the skete, he would remain hidden behind a column, so that no one would see him and show him respectful attention; nor would he pay attention to anyone else and thus be distracted from the sanctity of the service.

16. The Fathers of Sketis once gathered together to discuss the subject of Melchizedek (who, as is well known, is spoken of in Holy Scripture [Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 109:4; Hebrews 7:1-21]). They forgot, however, to invite Abba Kopris. They subsequently invited him and, when he finally arrived, asked him about the matter.

17. In reply, Abba Kopris struck his mouth three times and said: "Woe is you, Kopris! Woe is you, Kopris! For you have left aside those things that God has commanded you and probe into that which He does not ask of you." As soon as the other Fathers heard him, they understood the meaning of his words and left for their cells.

18. A brother once visited Abba Theodore, who labored in asceticism at Pherme. The brother straightaway began to speak and inquire about things which he had never, up to that point, put into practice in his life. So, the Elder told him:

"You, my child, have not yet found the boat, nor have you prepared your luggage. How, then, even before setting off, do you speak as if you have already arrived in the city to which you are headed? First do your work as a monk, and only then enter into such things as you are now discussing."

**B. From Abba Isaiah**

1. The desire to examine Holy Scripture out of curiosity engenders enmity and disputes between those who misinterpret it; but to weep for one's sins brings peace.

2. It is a sin for a monk to sit in his cell, to remain unrepentant of his sins, and to occupy himself solely with prying inquisitively into Holy Scripture.

3. Whosoever leaves his heart free to examine and interpret various passages of Scripture, wondering about the meaning of one thing and

another, before having given himself over to Christ, the same suffers from aimless and vain curiosity and is in great captivity.

4. Whosoever is watchful that he not be taken captive prefers to throw himself with humility before God, ever seeking His mercy.

5. Do not seek to understand the lofty details of the judgments of God when beseeching Him to help you and to come to rescue you from sin; for all things that concern God come on their own, if the place that is to receive them—that is, the heart—has been rendered chaste and pure.

6. Whosoever relies on his own knowledge and does his own will develops rancor in his soul and is unable to distance himself from the spirit that brings sorrow to his heart.

7. He who superficially studies the words of Scripture and interprets them according to his own opinion, judging himself to be in a good state, based on his interpretations thereof, assuredly has no knowledge of the glory of God or of the wealth of His goodness.

8. Contrarily, he who adopts the words of Holy Scripture and says with humility, "I do not know how to interpret them—I am but a man," glorifies God, and the wealth of God is treasured up in his heart commensurate with his spiritual strength and thought.

## Hypothesis XVIII

*A believer should abstain from knowledge falsely so called and must not consort with heretics. What true wisdom in God is, and that certain people would do well to live in simplicity, far from such discussions.*

### A. From Abba Isaiah

1. My brother, keep yourself from speaking with heretics, in your supposed desire to confirm them in the Faith, lest the poison of their deadly words wound your spirit and your way of thinking. Do not wish even to read the books of heretics, lest you bring death to your soul.

2. Stand firm in the teaching by which you were illumined during sacred catechesis and Holy Baptism, neither adding to it nor subtracting from it, and completely turning away from knowledge falsely so called,* which is contrary to sound doctrine, as the Apostle Paul said (I St. Timothy 1:10).

### B. From Abba Mark

1. The wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's eyes, as the Apostle Paul said (I Corinthians 3:19). By contrast, wisdom that comes from God is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, as the Divine James says (St. James 1:17), and is characterized by humble-mindedness.

2. Those who wish to be pleasing to others have acknowledged human, rather than Divine, wisdom. Thus, they glory and take pride in this human wisdom, deluding many of the more simple Christians. They have persuaded these simple folk to waste their time in philosophical discussions, relying on words of human wisdom, instead of endeavoring to save themselves by labors of piety and prayer (I Corinthians 2:4). Such a thing the Apostle constantly condemns, in that it renders the Cross of "none effect" [i.e., abrogates it—*Trans.*].

3. Here is what the First Epistle to the Corinthians says in this regard: "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect" (I Corinthians 1:17). And in another place, the Apostle says: "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in God's presence" (I Corinthians 1:27-29).

4. Hence, since God does not demand words of Greek wisdom but rather the labors of prayer and humble-mindedness, as we have shown, let us completely abstain from knowledge falsely so called, that we might not dangerously distance ourselves from the domain of the wisdom of God.

5. I have known simple-minded people who, by their humility of mind, proved to be wiser even than the wise. Yet another, having heard of the value of simplicity and following not in its lead with humility but, rather, boasting of his simplicity, fell into pride, which is hated by God.

6. He who trivializes wisdom and glories in his ignorance is ignorant not only according to speech, but also according to knowledge.

7. Just as wisdom of speech is one thing and sound judgment another, so also simplicity of speech is different from a lack of sound judgment. Being uneducated in letters will in no wise harm the pious person, just as wisdom of speech will not damage one humble of mind.

8. Do not say, "I do not know what I must do, and therefore am not responsible for not doing what is necessary." For if you perform as much good as you know, the rest will then be revealed to you. An act unknown to you will be understood by means of one known, just as in the case of rows of houses in a rural settlement, where one, in turn, reveals the next.

9. It is not to your benefit to know what ensues before first accomplishing, through arduous activity, that which comes before; for knowl-

edge wrought by inertness puffs one up with pride, whereas love edifies us when we are patient in all things, as the Apostle teaches (I Corinthians 13:1-8).

10. One sin upon another strengthens the power of evil, just as good things increase by mutual association, supporting those who participate therein in spiritual progress and ascent.

11. Without unceasing remembrance of God, true and genuine knowledge is impossible; for knowledge without remembrance of God is spurious.

12. Discourses of lofty and refined knowledge apply to one whose heart has not yet been softened by the love of God; for lacking fear, such a person cannot undertake labors of repentance.

13. It is fitting for a meek person to concern himself with matters of the Faith, for he does not test the forbearance of God; nor is he condemned by his conscience on account of continual transgressions.

**C. From St. Diadochos**

1. Both wisdom and knowledge, like all other Divine gifts, derive from the one Holy Spirit. Each of these gifts, however, is independent, producing a different action on the soul. For precisely this reason, to one has been given wisdom and to another knowledge, according to the measure of the gift of the Holy Spirit, as the Divine Paul explains to us (I Corinthians 12:4-11). Hence, knowledge joins man to God by means of inner experience, without moving the soul to seek the causes of various things or arming it with the expressive power of speech. For that matter, some of the philosophers of the desert (the ascetics) are illumined by the brilliance of Divine knowledge, regarding the action of which they have an inner sense, without, however, occupying themselves with Divine and lofty spiritual teaching.

2. When the other gift of the Holy Spirit, wisdom, is granted to someone along with inner knowledge (though such a thing is rare), it, combined with fear (of God), reveals these very energies of Divine knowledge, since by nature knowledge, through the force of action, and wisdom, through the power of spiritual discourse, illumine the soul.

Knowledge is brought to the soul by the power of prayer, great silence, and a complete lack of cares. As for wisdom, it is brought by the study—free from vainglory—of the word of God and, above all, by the Grace of God, freely offering the charism of His Wisdom.

3. Spiritual speech protects the soul from the passion of vainglory, since it enriches all of its parts with an inner sense of Divine light, rendering it so blissful that it no longer has need of the honor of men. On account of this inner light, spiritual speech ever preserves the intellect from the dangerous delusions of fantasy, for it transforms the mind, that it might be constantly turned towards the love of God.

4. Contrarily, speech founded on worldly wisdom provokes man always to love the empty glory of this temporal world. For such speech imparts to its admirers a love of praise, not having the power to benefit the soul with an inner sense of mystagogic experience, given that it is the creation of vainglorious people.

Hence, we will unfailingly discern the mystical presence of the Divine word in our souls when we divert our hours of philosophical conversation to a fervent remembrance of God, through silence and free from any worldly care or thought.**

**D. From Abba Isaac**

1. Take care not to read the doctrines of heretics; for such a thing prompts the spirit of blasphemy to beset you.

2. The truly wise and prudent person is one who has fully understood that there is an end to the present life and hastens to put an end to his faults and failings. For what knowledge or wisdom is greater than this: that is, for one to concern himself with departing this present life for eternity without having been corrupted by sin, without any part of him having been defiled by the stench of the desires of this world, and without his soul having been tainted by the putative and external sweetness thereof?

3. A person who has refined his thoughts and attained to an understanding of all of the mysteries of nature, who has abounded in contrivances, and who has successfully come to understand sundry natural phenomena, but whose soul continues to be covered by the stain of sin

and whose conscience has not born witness to him through the hope and experience of future good things—who seeks to master perfection by his own knowledge and worldly hope—is the most thoughtless of all; such a one can only be called wise by those who are like unto him.

4. Question, by the same: Who is it that has been illumined in his thoughts and intentions?

5. Answer: It is he who has discovered the bitterness hidden within the sweetness of the world and has hindered his mouth from drinking of this cup; it is he who ever attends to the salvation of his soul and does not halt on the path of asceticism and virtue until he has left this world; and finally, it is he who shuts the doors of his senses, such that yearning for the present life might never enter thereby and plunder his treasures.

**E. From St. Ephraim**

1. My brother, wisdom is not found in much knowledge and learning; rather, as Holy Scripture says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the counsel of Saints is understanding: for to know the law is the character of a sound mind" (Proverbs 9:10). This is true because faith in God engenders a sound mind, and a sound mind is a river of living water; moreover, the acquirer thereof will be filled with its beneficial and life-giving waters.

2. There can be neither true wisdom nor good judgment where there is no fear of the Lord; for the wealth of wisdom is to revere the Lord, to Whom is due glory unto the ages. Amen.

* "Knowledge falsely so called" principally refers to the heresy of the Gnostics, who combined philosophic and Christian elements, declaring that only they possessed true knowledge. Among such heretics were Markion [a second-century heretic, considered by many to be a dualist and not a Gnostic, as such—*Trans.*], Basileides [an early second-century Gnostic heretic—*Trans.*], and others.

** This view calls to mind a similar opinion, by St. Gregory the Theologian, according to whom "the Divine is experienced in silence."

## Hypothesis XIX

*Demons can do nothing against the faithful; hence, we must hold them in contempt, not take fright on account of them, and pay them no heed, whatever they do. How one discerns whether a vision proceeds from the demons or from the Angels; for demons frequently create illusions, in order to lead the simple-minded astray and to bring a (false) consolation to the soul. Regarding which visions are Divine and which are satanic.*

### A. From the Life of St. Anthony

1. St. Anthony would say to his disciples:

My children, you must not fear the demons, even should they appear to attack or should threaten us with death, for they are weak and can do nothing but make threats. Subsequent to the incarnate Economy of the Lord, the Enemy has fallen and his powers have been weakened.

2. Thus, on account of the great miracle of the Incarnation of our Savior, the Devil has been annihilated and remains incapacitated, unable to do anything. Since he is a tyrant, however, he does not rest, despite having fallen; rather, even if only with words, he continues to menace. May each of you think upon this, and you will thereby be able to hold the demons in contempt.

3. If demons had bodies, as do we humans, it would be possible for them to say: "When people hide, we do not find them; but when we discover them, then we are able to harm them." And we humans would be able to escape their notice by hiding, shutting the doors of our houses against them.

4. Demons, however, are not constructed like humans, with material bodies. Since they are immaterial beings, they can enter our houses even when the doors are shut. They even exist in the air [in the ethereal realm—*Trans.*], moving through it, together with their leader, the Devil. They wish to do evil and are prepared to do harm. As our Savior says:

"He was a murderer from the beginning" (St. John 8:44).

5. But by the might and Grace of our Savior, we now live in freedom and in our virtuous estate war against them. They are cowardly and can do nothing. Neither are they hindered by place to conspire against us (since they are immaterial), nor do they regard us as friends, so as to take pity on us, nor do they love what is good, so as to be corrected.

6. On the contrary, they are very wicked, and the only thing that interests them is how to harm lovers of virtue and the God-fearing. They do nothing but menace precisely because they cannot do anything else. For if they could, they would not hesitate, but would straightaway do evil, being disposed to do so—and especially against us.

7. What I am telling you is demonstrated by our present gathering [i.e., the gathering of the Saint's disciples to hear his counsels—*Trans.*]. For lo, we have now assembled and inveigh against the demons. They are perfectly aware that they are weakened when we advance in virtue and piety. Thus, if they had power, they would allow none of us Christians to live; for that which the sinner—and, consequently, also the Devil—abhors is piety. Being unable to do anything against us, they foam with rage, since they can do none of the things they threaten to do.

8. We must also consider this, so as not to fear the demons: If they had the authority to do us evil, they would not come in throngs against the Hesychasts in the desert, nor would they create illusions. And they would not transform themselves to lead us astray. It would be sufficient for just one of them to come and do what he could and desired. And indeed, he who has authority does not destroy by means of illusions or deceptive wiles; nor does he frighten in large numbers. Rather he immediately employs his full authority as he so desires.

9. Demons, on the other hand, not being able to do anything, play like actors on a stage, changing forms and causing fear—as though before children—by the illusion of coming in throngs and by their various transformations; wherefore, they prove themselves to be rather pitiable and feeble.

10. The true Angel sent by the Lord against the Assyrians had no need of weapons, external illusions, great numbers, or knocking and

noises; instead, he quietly and noiselessly used his might and immediately smote one hundred eighty-five thousand (IV Kings 19:35 and Isaiah 37:36). Demons, on the other hand, not having authority to do any harm, try at least to frighten humans with illusions.

11. And again, in the case of the greatly-beleaguered Job, it was not the Devil who brought about such misfortunes: God handed over Job to the Devil so that the former's virtue and the greatness of his patience might be shown forth. Since the Devil was unable to do anything whatsoever against Job, he sought permission from God to tempt him; and, having received it, only then did he cause the just one sorrows and misfortunes. Not only against Job, but not even against his animals, was he able to do anything without God's permission (Job, Chapters 1 and 2).

12. The Devil does not even have power over swine, much less against humans, who have been fashioned in the image of God. As we read in the Holy Gospel, the demons besought the Savior, saying: "When we leave this man, at least suffer us to enter into the herd of swine" (St. Matthew 8:31).

If, then, they do not have authority to do evil to swine, much less so do they have authority over humans, who have been made in the image of God.

13. So, we must fear God alone and hold the demons in contempt. The more they try to frighten us, the more we should intensify our asceticism. For a great weapon against the Devil is an upright life and faith in God. Greatly do the demons fear the ascetics' fasting, vigils, unceasing prayer, meekness, love of silence, lack of avarice, rejection of vainglory, humble-mindedness, love for the poor, almsgiving, peaceableness, and, above all, piety in Christ.

14. For this reason, they do their utmost to overpower those who trample them underfoot; for they are very well aware of the Grace granted to the faithful by our Savior with the words: "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy" (St. Luke 10:19).

15. If, then, they come upon you at night, fear not; seal yourself with the sign of the Cross, make the Cross also over your dwelling-place, and say the Jesus Prayer. You will then see that they vanish, for they are cow-

*Righteous Job sitting on a dunghill*

ardly and greatly fear the sign of the Cross of our Lord, since, of course, our Lord utterly annihilated them while on the Cross.

But if, despite these things, they impudently remain, cavorting and creating various fantastical scenes to frighten you, do not lose heart or be scared; it is nothing, and they will soon vanish.

16. At other times, in order to delude us, they often invisibly pretend to chant, using words from Holy Scripture. And when we are sleeping, they wake us up to pray, hardly allowing us to sleep at all. But we must pay them no heed, even should they advise us to eat nothing, or even should they pretend to jeer at us and condemn us for what we have done at their own suggestion. For they do so not out of piety or love for the truth, but rather to dishearten even the righteous ascetics themselves: to make their asceticism seem without benefit, to bewilder them, and to make them believe that the monastic life is indeed onerous and wearisome—and in so doing, to impede monastics from warring against them.

17. For this reason, when the demons said to our Lord Jesus Christ: "I know Thee and Who Thou art—the Holy One of God!" (St. Mark 1:23-25), though they confessed the truth, the Lord nevertheless silenced them, lest they should secretly sow their evil along with the truth; and also in order to make us take care never to pay attention to the words of the Devil. And rightly so, since it is unseemly, while being in possession of the Holy Scriptures, and after the coming of our Savior, to be taught by the Devil, who did not keep his position, but rather took it in mind to do one thing instead of another. This is why God prevented the Devil from uttering words of Holy Scripture, as the Prophet-King David says: "But unto the sinner God has said: Why dost thou declare My statutes, and takest My covenant in thy mouth? Thou hast hated instruction, and hast cast My words behind thee" (Psalm 49:16-17).

18. They do all of these things, then, and speak, make noises, act, and dissemble, in order to deceive the righteous. They knock and thunder, laugh nonsensically, and whistle; but if one pays them no attention, they then weep as ones vanquished.

19. The Lord silenced the demons. As for us, having been instructed by the Saints, we must act in concord with the Saints and imitate their bravery; for they also, seeing the manifestations and actions of the

demons, would say: "While the sinner stood before me..., I was dumb, and humbled myself, and held my peace, even from good" (Psalm 38:2-3). And again: "But I, as a deaf man, heard not, and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. And I was as a man that heareth not" (Psalm 37:14-15).

20. Hence, we must not listen to the demons, for they are completely alien to us. Nor must we submit ourselves to them, even should they wake us up for prayer and speak to us about fasting. Let us solely take care that our disposition for asceticism remains firm, and let not our actions depend on the demons, who do everything deceitfully. Nor should we pay any attention to them, as if they were benevolent. It is easy, when God grants us enlightenment, to distinguish the presence of the good Angels from the evil demons.

21. For visions of the Saints do not produce any agitation, as is expressed by the saying: "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street" (Isaiah 42:2). Such visions take place in quietness and meekness, such that joy, gladness, and courage immediately appear in the soul. This happens because the Lord is with the Saints—and our Lord is our joy—as is the might of God the Father. During such visions, the thoughts of one's soul remain undisturbed and are not agitated like the waves of a rough sea. During good visions, which come from God, the soul, upon beholding Angels or Saints, becomes illumined; for there enters into it a yearning for Divine and future good things, and it absolutely desires to become one with those who have appeared, and even to go with them, if such were possible.

22. If it should happen that some take fright at the vision of good Angels, the latter immediately remove this fear from the soul by the power of love, as did the Archangel Gabriel for Zacharias (St. Luke 1:13) and the Angel who appeared to the Myrrh-bearing women at the Tomb of the Resurrection (St. Matthew 28:5), as well as the Angel who said to the shepherds, at the Nativity of our Savior, "Fear not" (St. Luke 2:10). For the fear potentially caused by visions of good entities is not caused by mental cowardice, but rather by the awareness of the presence of *lofty beings.*

23. Such are the characteristic features of visions of the Saints. A completely different matter is the incursion of vicious and evil spirits,

which is accompanied by terrifying banging, strange noises, and clamoring, which recall the unruly movements of thieves or of undisciplined youths. All of these produce fear, mental agitation, confusion, melancholic and downcast thoughts, hatred for ascetics, aversion for one's spiritual duties, sorrow, recollection of one's relatives and fear of death, a desire for various evil acts, indifference to virtue, and, finally, disorder in one's daily routine.

24. Hence, when you behold various visions and become afraid, pay attention. If the fear immediately leaves the soul and is replaced by unutterable joy and happiness, courage, recovery of spiritual strength, imperturbability of thoughts, everything we previously mentioned, courage, and love for God, then take heart and give thanks to God; for this joy and general state of soul manifest the perfection of those of whom the vision consists. In this way, Abraham, upon seeing a Divine vision, experienced an inner pleasure (Genesis 18, and elsewhere). And when Mary, the Mother of God, spoke with Elizabeth, the unborn babe leaped "for joy" in the latter's womb (St. Luke 1:44). These few examples confirm what we have said above.

25. Demonic visions and manifestations of the Evil One produce completely different results. That is, if some people continue to experience mental fear by what they see or feel, this is a sign of the presence of enemies; for the demons do not remove this fear from such people, as the Saints do. To the contrary, indeed, when the demons see that some become frightened, they increase the illusions, so as to frighten them even more. And when they have become masters of the soul through such illusions, they then delude a person, saying to their captives: "Fall down now and worship us."

26. In this way did they delude the ancient Greeks, and came to be considered gods by them. The Lord did not permit us to be deceived by the Devil, since He exorcized him in the desert, when the Devil attempted to lead astray the Lord Himself, by such illusions, and to frighten Him. For when the Lord said, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve," (St. Matthew 4:10), He helped and fortified us, that other demons, upon hearing these things, might also be overcome by the power of the Lord, Who rebuked and exorcized them with these words. Thus, the Lord said these things at that time for our sakes.

27. Listen, now, to what happened to me personally. Someone once knocked at the door of my cell. I went out and saw before me an imposing and tall apparition. I said to him:

"Who are you?"

And he answered me:

"I am Satan."

"What do you seek here?" I asked.

"Why do the monks and other Christians unfairly reprove me?" he answered. "Why do they curse me all of the time?"

28. I answered him:

"And why do you bother them?"

"I am not the one who bothers them," he replied. "They become disturbed on their own. I have been completely incapacitated. Have they not read what is written in Holy Scripture: 'The swords of the enemy have utterly failed, and Thou hast destroyed his cities'(Psalm 9:7)? I no longer have a place; I have no darts and no city. There are Christians everywhere, and even the desert has filled with monastics. So let them watch over themselves and not curse me anymore."

29. Then I, having heard the words of the Devil with astonishment, marvelled at the Grace of Christ and said to him again:

"You are always a liar. But now you have spoken the truth against your will. For after His Divine coming into the world, Christ has incapacitated and divested you of your power, having utterly vanquished you."

As soon as the Devil heard the name of Christ our Savior, being burned by His name alone, he immediately disappeared.

30. Since even the Devil himself, then, confesses that he can do nothing, we would do well to hold him and his demons in utter contempt. Let us, thus, not lose our moral courage; let our souls not lose heart, and let us not create imaginary fears, saying: "Lest the demon come and overpower me"; "Lest he seize and overwhelm me"; or "Lest he come completely unexpectedly and greatly trouble me."

31. Let us not occupy ourselves with such thoughts at all, or become distressed as if we were lost. On the contrary, let us have courage and rejoice as ones saved from manifest danger. Let our souls take strength from the thought that the Lord is near to us—He Who has utterly van-

quished and abolished the demons' power. Let us never forget that, since the Lord is with us, our enemies can do nothing against us.

32. If, therefore, the demons come and find our souls secured by these thoughts and contemplating the future good things, they will leave in shame. But if, on the other hand, they find us fearful, agitated, and influenced by imaginary fears, they will then increase their bugaboos, with illusions and threats, and use our own fears against us by actuating them, and even adding to them.

33. Thus, if we wish to disparage the Enemy, let us always meditate on the things of the Lord, and let our souls ever rejoice with the power of hope. We will then see the wiles of the demons vanish before us like smoke, and the demons themselves hastening to leave, rather than to hound us. For as I have said, the demons are terribly cowardly, ever awaiting the fire of Hell that has been prepared for them.

34. And know this, so that you might not be afraid: When some fantastical image or vision appears before you, do not let your morale drop from initial fear; but whatever kind of vision it may be, first ask with boldness: "Who are you? Where are you from?" If the vision is Divine and comes from holy beings, your soul will receive inner assurance and the latter will turn your fear into joy. If, on the other hand, the vision is demonic, it will fade away, since the Devil will see that your mind is courageous.

35. It is a sign of imperturbability when someone boldly asks the vision who it is and from whence it comes. Thus it was that Joshua (Joshua 5:13-15) immediately received an answer upon asking, and the Devil did not escape the attention of David when the latter asked him who he was.

**B. From the Life of St. Pachomios**

1. St. Pachomios had the custom of going far from his cell to a place of greater solitude to pray, after which he would return. So it was that, during one of his return journeys, the wicked demons, so as to mock him, met him as if he were a nobleman, saying one to another: "Make way for the man of God to pass by."

2. Pachomios, however, firm in his faith and hope in Christ, castigated the demons, reckoning their tricks to be like the barking of wild dogs. The demons, seeing the valor of the holy man, and that they had not succeeded in frightening him, assembled together against him, producing a great disturbance. Taking hold of his cell, they created the imaginary impression that they were shaking it, so that the Saint would think that the place was quaking at its foundations.

3. The Saint remained undaunted in the face of this assault, and drawing anew his spiritual bow, chanted with a great voice: "God is our refuge and strength, a help in the afflictions that come heavily upon us" (Psalm 45:2). As he recited this Psalm, the demons vanished like smoke and a great silence followed. The demons did not abandon their efforts, however. A short while later they began a new attack; and just as dogs, which back off after having been chased away, but then impudently attack again, so also did the demons act against the Saint, attempting to trick him by other means.

4. Now then, what did they do? A great number of demons gathered together in one place, took heavy ropes, and wrapped them sturdily around a leaf from a tree. Then, having formed two teams, one opposite the other, each side incited the other to pull at the leaf, as if it were a matter of pulling on an enormous boulder. They did so in the belief that the Saint would laugh and that they would thereby have something about which to boast at his expense. The blessed Pachomios, however, seeing the insolence of the demons, groaned to the Lord against them, at which the phalanx of demons immediately disappeared.

5. St. Pachomios, seeing the demons warring against him anew with even greater vehemence, and unceasingly attacking him, besought the Lord to deprive him of sleep, so that he could remain awake, as far as possible, and thereby be able to defeat them night and day, according to the passage of Holy Scripture: "Neither shall I turn again until they be consumed. I will afflict them, and they shall not be able to rise; they shall fall under my feet" (Psalm 17:38-39).

6. Another time, while the Saint was taking a bit of rest, a demon approached him and, standing beside him, said: "Hail, Pachomios. I am Christ and have come to you, my friend." St. Pachomios, however, hav-

ing discerned by the Holy Spirit the machinations of the Evil One, thought a bit and said to him: "The mystical and preternatural presence of Christ's holiness fills one's soul with joy and frees it from every fear. Simultaneously, at such a vision, all human thoughts disappear. Yet I am now disconcerted and my mind is filled with human thoughts, contrary to what should be occurring within me if this vision were of a Divine nature."

7. He then straightaway arose and, taking courage from the strength of his faith in Christ, moved forward to seize the apparition with his hands; and, blowing on his face, said to him:

"Depart from me, you Devil. May you and your illusion and your satanic plans be accursed."

8. As soon as the Saint had said these things, the Devil immediately turned to dust, filling the cell, and even the air, with a foul odor. At the same time, the Devil was heard to howl: "If I had been able to take you in, you would now be writhing at my feet. But the power of Christ is great, and thus I am daily mocked by you. For all that, I will not cease warring against you, for I must do my work."

9. Strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit, St. Pachomios thanked God for His exceptional gifts.

**C. From the *Gerontikon***

1. Certain brothers went to Abba Anthony, in order to tell him about certain fantastic visions they had been seeing and to learn from him if they were genuine or demonic. They had taken a donkey along with them, which had died on the road.

2. As soon as the brothers encountered St. Anthony, and he had greeted them, he said:

"How did your donkey die on the road?"

Astonished, the brothers asked him:

"How did you know about that, Abba?"

And St. Anthony responded:

"The demons revealed it to me."

"But that is why we have come to question you," said the brothers, "for we see certain things that, in fact, come true. Have we perhaps been

deluded?"

3. St. Anthony then informed them, using the example of the donkey, that the images they saw were illusions and machinations of the Devil, which he created using their own imagination.

4. A certain brother lived alone in asceticism. At one point, the demons came to tempt him in the form of Angels. They roused him for his nightly service and presented visions of light to him.

This ascetic visited an Elder to give a detailed account of this phenomenon and to ask his opinion. He said to the Elder:

"Abba, Angels come to my cell with visions of light and wake me for my service."

The Elder replied:

"Beware, do not heed them; for they are demons. When they come to wake you up, say to them: 'I will not heed you. I will get up when I so desire.'"

5. The brother heeded the Elder's instructions with great attention and decided to put them into practice. He went and shut himself up in his cell. The next night, the demons came again, as they were wont, and woke him up. Then the brother, following the Elder's instructions, said to the demons:

"I will not heed you. I will get up when I want to."

In reply, the demons said to him:

"Has that liar, that foul monk, deceived you? Learn what kind of a person he is: A few days ago, a brother visited him to ask him for some money. And though he had money, he lied, saying he had none, and gave him nothing. Learn from this that he is a liar."

6. As soon as day dawned, the brother went to the Elder and told him what the demon had said.

The Elder replied:

"I admit that I did indeed have money. But I did not give any to the brother who asked for it because my conscience informed me that it would harm him spiritually. I thus decided to transgress one commandment, so that the brother might not be harmed, in which case I would have transgressed ten. As for you, do not pay any attention to the demons, who wish to deceive you."

Thus the brother, strengthened by what he had heard from the Elder,

returned to his cell.

7. Two brothers departed for the innermost desert. They agreed to remain struggling alone for six days of the week and to meet on the seventh, in order to pray together and to eat a little, without exchanging a word. And indeed, so they did.

8. The demons, however, took it in mind to destroy this fine ascesis. Thus, they went to one of the two and deceived him in sundry ways. That is, they would foretell to him the visits of brothers or events happening in other places. Seeing and hearing that these things came true, the ascetic did not discern the snare of the Devil, but rather believed that they were Angels predicting these things. Shortly thereafter, they hindered him from going on the appointed day to meet with the other brother.

9. Now, it so happened that the deluded monk went to visit a brother at the monastery. At one point, he asked some of the brothers if it was possible for a person to know what was taking place far off. Those conversing with him understood that it was a matter of satanic deception, the monk himself being the victim thereof, and they rebuked him sternly:

"If you continue to pay attention to such satanic machinations, do not visit our monastery again."

This brotherly threat brought him to his senses and he straightaway repented, abandoning all such hazardous errors.

10. As soon as he returned to his place of asceticism, the demons came again, as usual, in order to deceive him. Then the sobered monk exorcized them and called them liars. The demons forthwith changed into irrational beasts and, having threatened him, departed thence.

11. The following was told about a certain Elder: Whenever he remained struggling in his cell, he would see demons with his own eyes and would totally humiliate them. Seeing that he was being vanquished by the Elder, the Devil transformed himself and appeared anew before him, saying to him:

"I am Christ."

12. As soon as the Elder saw the Devil, he immediately closed his

eyes. The Devil said to him again:

"Why are you closing your eyes? I am Christ."

Then the Elder replied with boldness:

"I do not want to see Christ in this world."

Upon hearing this reply, the demon vanished forthwith.

13. The demons said to another Elder:

"Do you want to see Christ?"

With a groan, the Elder replied:

"Anathema on you and on what you are proposing to me; for I believe Christ, Who said to me, through His sacred Gospel: 'Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not' (St. Matthew 24:23)." When the demons heard these words, they vanished.

**D. From St. Diadochos**

1. When the mind begins to experience the sweet delight of the rays of the Holy Spirit upon it, then Satan comes to counteract this action. That is, in the silence of the night, as soon as one is overtaken by a little sleep, Satan approaches the soul and offers for its pleasure a certain feeling of purely external sweetness.

2. If now, at this moment, the mind calls to remembrance with fervent warmth the Holy Name of our Lord Jesus, and uses it against this deception, the Deceiver will immediately depart from the watchful servant, though a terrible battle arises in his soul.

3. From this battle, however, the mind more clearly perceives the deception of the Evil One and gains experience in discerning good from evil. The delightful consolation of the soul—which, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, is good and beneficial—supervenes when the body awakens. But even during sleep, it is possible for the human spirit to discern a glitter of the age to come. This comes about, however, only when a person literally clings to the remembrance of God, out of his love for Him.

4. That comfort of the soul which aims at its seduction, however, always supervenes when the struggler is overtaken by a little sleep and when his remembrance of God is moderate or non-existent (on account of the sluggishness of one's mental faculties in sleep). For on the one hand, the pure consolation of the soul, as coming from God, clearly

seeks, in vigilance of mind and body, to delight and sweeten the souls of strugglers for piety, directing and leading them to the experience and fullness of love—to a bountiful outpouring of love.

5. Consolation, on the other hand, that comes from the Devil and which is designed to deceive (since the Devil is wont to lead the soul astray and move it by the wind of error) endeavors to transmit to the soul an experience of sensuous comfort (in the form of dreams, etc.), when the body is asleep and the mental faculties are sluggish. Indeed, it is for this reason that the *healthy* mind—found ever-vigilant—is constantly moved by the remembrance of God.

6. If, then, the mind holds God vividly and continuously in memory, as we have said, then it not only dispels that deceptive breeze of the Evil One, which brings external and fleeting pleasure, but it also joyfully throws itself into battle with the Devil, having as a second weapon (after the Grace of God) the confidence that it has acquired from its experience with the snares set by Satan to seduce the soul.

7. If the soul, through a clear and unambiguous movement, free from imagination, becomes aflame with love for God and draws the body, too, into the depths of this ineffable love (whether the body is awake or asleep—albeit energized by Grace), in the manner which I have described, and contemplates nothing other than that to which it is moved, then one must know that it is being acted upon by the energy of the Holy Spirit. This occurs because the soul, delighted by this indescribable sweetness, can think of nothing else, overwhelmed as it is by such an intense and holy joy.

8. If, however, during the time of this action by the Holy Spirit, the mind is assailed by doubt as to the nature of this energy, or by an obscene thought—or even if it employs the Holy Name of Christ our Savior, but not for the sake of being strengthened thereby in love for God, but rather using it in defense against the Enemy—then one must know that the consolation brought about in the soul derives from the Deceiver, who wishes to adulterate the soul by this demonstration of superficial and external joy. That is why this joy, under the guise of which the Devil attempts to impose on the soul, is wholly idle and inert, failing to incline the soul towards that which is supremely desired.

9. For when the Devil sees that a person's mind truly glories against him, owing to the mind's awareness of the power it has gained through unceasing remembrance of God, then, as I have said, the Devil attempts to arouse the soul with comforts that appear to be good, so that the soul, altered as to its inner inclinations and desires by this feeble and enervating sweetness, is not able to recognize the contamination of the deceitful one.

10. But how are we to recognize that which is the spirit of truth and that which is the spirit of error? (For it is, of course, impossible for one either to experience Divine sweetness and goodness through an inner sense of the soul or to be sensibly tempted by the spite of the demons, if he is not inwardly informed regarding these things.) Thus, it is by inner assurance that we will distinguish the spirit of truth from the spirit of error.

11. In the case of the action of the Spirit of Truth, Grace has come to abide in the depths of the mind, whereas the evil spirits remain and move about in the regions of the heart; for the demons never want their satanic energies to be recognized by men, lest the mind become acutely aware of the demons' activities and arm itself against them through remembrance of the Name of God.

12. When one hears of a "sense of the mind," let us not hope to behold the glory of God visibly, as a sensible thing. For we see that, when the soul is pure, it experiences joy and inner pleasure on account of an ineffable mystical taste of sweet consolation, coming from the preternatural presence of God, without, of course, anything of the invisible world appearing to the soul, since here, in this life, we march towards perfection by faith and not by the sensible vision of forms, as the Blessed Apostle Paul says (see II Corinthians 5:7).

13. Hence, if light or a shape in the form of fire should appear to a struggler, he must not pay attention to such a vision; for it is clearly a deception of the Enemy. Many, having fallen into this delusion out of foolishness, have departed from the path of truth. We, however, know that as long as our souls remain in this mortal body, we are far from God, with regard to the possibility of our seeing Him, or certain of His heavenly wonders, by means of our sensible eyes; for our material eyes cannot apprehend spiritual states.

**E. From the *Gerontikon***

1. An ascetic Elder abode in a temple of the idols. The demons, having arrived and beholding him, said:

"Quickly leave our place."

The Elder said to them:

"No place belongs to you."

In response, the demons began scattering the palm branches with which he worked.

2. The Elder persisted in gathering them up again. A demon then grabbed him by the arm, so as to drag him outside. When the Elder had been dragged to the door, he grabbed hold of it with his other hand and began to call out:

"Jesus, help me!"

When the demon heard the Divine Name, he let go of him and departed.

3. Following this, the Elder began to weep. He then heard a voice from above saying:

"Why are you weeping?"

"Because," answered the Elder, "the demons dare to grab hold of man and do such things."

He heard the voice again saying:

"You were inattentive; for, when you called upon Me, you see how I was immediately at your side."

At these revelatory words, the Elder thanked God and occupied himself again with his Godly work.

4. Abba Daniel was once going up from Sketis to Terenuthis.* While on the road, he entered an idolaters' temple to sleep. Within the temple were various skeletons of idolaters from ancient times. Abba Daniel took one of them and put it under his head as a pillow.

5. The demons, marvelling at his courage and wishing to scare him, pretended to call out to a woman by name.

"Come, so-and-so. Let us go together to the baths."

Then another demon answered, as if it were in the skull, under the Elder's head:

"I have a stranger on top of me and cannot come."

6. The Elder, however, did not take fright, but with boldness hit the skeleton, saying to the invisible demon:

"Go into the darkness, inasmuch as you can (do *that*)."**

Upon hearing this reply, the demons cried out with a great voice: "You have vanquished us!" and left in shame.

7. An Elder was once asked:

"Why am I afraid when walking in the desert?"

"Because you are still alive," answered the Elder (meaning that if he considered himself to be dead, he would not be afraid).

8. A monk asked Abba Theodore of Pherme:

"If you were suddenly to hear the noise of something falling, would you be afraid, Abba?"

To this question, the Elder replied:

"Even if Heaven and earth were to collide, Theodore would not be afraid."

Indeed, Abba Theodore had fervently besought God to take pusillanimity from him, and God had hearkened to his prayer, which is why the brother asked him regarding this.

9. A brother came to an Elder and said:

"Father, what am I to do, for I am seized by fear at night?"

The Elder replied:

"The inhabitants of a city fear invasions of barbarians, if they have not secured the help of the king. As soon as they learn, however, that a duke or army commander has arrived in their city, they fear no more for their safety, knowing that these others are taking care of them. Even if they hear that the barbarians are invading, they are not anxious, for they have protectors warring on their behalf.

10. "As for us, then, if we believe in God, we do not fear the demons; for God sends us His help and scatters all of our enemies."

* See the endnotes for Hypothesis XLII, Book I.

** The text in *The Evergetinos* here reads "ἐφ' ὅσον δὲν ἠμπορεῖς," or "inasmuch as you cannot" ("εἰ οὐ δύνασαι," or "if you cannot," in the older Greek). The critical text of the *Gerontikon* has a variant reading, which we have followed: "*εἰ δύνασαι*," or "if you can" ("if you are able"). (See *Τὸ Μέγα Γεροντικόν* [*The Great Gerontikon*] [Thessaloniki: Ekdose Hierou Hesychasteriou "To Genesion tes Theotokou," 1995], Vol. II, p. 352). The narration itself is, in both instances, confusing. As the story goes, the demon within the skull of the idolater responds, in a woman's voice, to the invitation of the other demons

to visit the baths (an obviously obscene proposition). The imaginary woman (demon) answers that she cannot, because the Elder is resting on the skull which she has inhabited. The Elder shows his lack of fear at these demonic shenanigans by telling the demon in the skull, "Go into the darkness, inasmuch as you can (do *that*)" (i.e., "since you are able to do *that*, even though you *cannot* go to the baths"), mocking it by recognizing it as a dark or evil spirit. The reading in *The Evergetinos* also maintains this scornful statement: "Go into the darkness, inasmuch as you cannot," though it is incomplete; the entire second clause, to be understandable, should read, "inasmuch as you cannot go to the baths"—*Trans.*

## Hypothesis XX

*Dreams appear in divers manners, for which reason it is safer not to place our trust in them. Nothing of the future is known to the demons, though they pretend to know certain things, foretelling them as if from their own knowledge.*

### A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

#### Peter

1. Please instruct me as to whether we should pay attention to dreams.

#### Gregory

2. We must know that images in dreams appear to the soul for six reasons: a) when the stomach is full; b) when the stomach is empty; and c) when we sleep, when various thoughts and reflections are transformed into dreams. In other circumstances, d) the Devil deludes us through dreams, e) these dreams usually resulting from the combining of our thoughts and reflections with the delusions of the Devil. Finally f), God reveals His will to man through dreams. We all know from experience that the first two causes of nocturnal dreams derive from us. Holy Scriptures tells us about the other four causes.

3. We must not, then, put our trust in these dreams and draw conclusions from them; for if dreams were free from the danger of snares set by the Devil for mankind, the wise Sirach would not beckon our attention, saying: "Dreams have deceived many, and they have failed that put their trust in them" (Ecclesiasticus 31:7). He also instructs us not to conjecture about, or even to pay heed to, dreams: "Divinations, soothsayings, and dreams are vain" (Ecclesiasticus 31:5). This wise man, knowing that dreams usually proceed from the deceptions of the Devil, teaches us that dreams are followed by a great many diversions (that is, in endeavoring to interpret his dreams, a person is distracted from the fundamental purpose of saving his soul, thereby becoming an instru-

ment of the Enemy).

4. That dreams may also be attributed to Divine revelation is demonstrated by the personal history of Joseph. As we know, he saw in his sleep that he would become master of his brothers (see Genesis 37:5-8). This dream was not slow in being confirmed by the events that ensued. Likewise, Joseph, the Betrothed of the Virgin, was informed by an Angel in a dream to take up the Divine Babe and flee to Egypt (see St. Matthew 2:13).

5. It is likewise possible for dreams to proceed both from our own thoughts *and* from Divine revelation. The Prophet Daniel most clearly teaches us this when interpreting the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, saying to him: "As for thee, O King, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter; and He that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass." Soon after, he adds: "Behold! Thou sawest a great image before thee," and proceeds to give a detailed account of the king's dream. In conclusion, Daniel explains both the purpose of the dream and the thoughts of the King, as well as the Divine revelation from which the dream arose (*cf.* Daniel 2:27-45).

6. Since, then, dreams give rise to doubts on account of the great differences between the causes that produce them in our souls, one should not believe them; for it is not easy to ascertain from whence they derive. Holy men, however, are able to distinguish between dreams arising from deceptions of the Devil and revelations of God by a certain gift of discernment, through which they discriminate between what they receive from the good spirit and what they suffer on the part of the Deceiver.

7. For if the mind attentively examines the provenance of dreams, the spirit tempting and deceiving a person will be unable to sink him with many deceptions, given that this spirit usually tells a person sundry things that will come to pass only so as to be able decisively to ensnare him, in the end, by any deception he can.

8. Recently, this is what happened to one of our own, who paid great heed to dreams. He saw in a dream that he would live many years, and thus gathered up a good deal of money so as to last him until his old age. Unexpectedly, however, he died a sudden death, leaving his money

untouched, here on earth, and without taking any good act (e.g., almsgiving) with him from this money as a provision for the other life.

**B. From the Life of St. Anthony the Great**

1. The great Anthony said to some monks visiting him:

My children, you must not believe anything that the demons say, even if they pretend to foretell certain things. Oftentimes, for example, they announce the arrival of brothers who are on their way, specifying the very day they are to arrive. And the brothers do indeed come. The demons foretell such things, however, not because they care about those who listen to them, but rather to induce these listeners to trust them; and having thus made puppets out of them, they destroy them.

2. This is why we should pay them no heed. What is more, when they tell us something about the future, we must refute them; for we have no need of them. That is to say, what is so remarkable about this if the demons, having seen the people when they were setting off, overtake them on the road (being able to move more quickly than humans) and go ahead, in order to announce their arrival? Even a horse could do such a thing, since it runs more quickly than a pedestrian.

3. Hence, we should not marvel at the demons for such an achievement, since they cannot foreknow what is to happen before it happens. The demons simply grab hold of what they see, like thieves and spies, and run at full speed to announce it.

4. A person who runs quickly and overtakes a slow walker would be able to achieve the same thing. What I am saying is this: Before someone sets off, the demons do not know whether he is going to walk somewhere. As soon as they see him set off, they scurry; and, before the traveller arrives, they make his coming known to those at his destination. And indeed, after several days, the person actually arrives!

5. The demons have frequently been proven wrong, for that matter, and those who believed them were misled. For in the meantime, having left, the traveller turned around and went back, or Divine Providence ordained that something else should happen. The ancient idolatrous diviners of the Greeks relied on this cunning of the demons, and the people who lived before Christ were thereby led astray. Now, however, they

have once and for all ceased deceiving people; for the Lord has come: He Who abolished the artifice of the diviners along with that of the demons.

6. The demons, therefore, know nothing of their own accord but, like spies, pass on what they see to others. They do not, then, foreknow what will come to pass, but deduce it. For this reason, if something true ever comes of what they foretell, one must not marvel at them or pay attention to them. We can, for example, observe such an ability in doctors, who, through experience, have an understanding of the nature and development of diseases. As soon as they ascertain a disease in a person that they have frequently observed in others, they immediately deduce and foretell the progress of the illness.

7. Sailors and farmers also develop experience from frequent observation of the sky and its signs, which is why, as soon as they see certain atmospheric conditions, they can foretell if wintry or fair weather is coming. One can surely not maintain that what they foretell is attributable to Divine inspiration; rather, everyone knows that such a prediction of theirs is the result of practice and experience.

8. Moreover, in what way is it useful to be informed in advance by the demons as to what is to happen after a certain number of days? Or what need is there for us to hasten to learn these things? For knowledge of what is to happen in the future does not constitute an agent of virtue, nor is it a characteristic mark of a good and virtuous life, which is why none of us is praised for happening to learn something that is to take place. On the contrary, each will be judged as to whether he kept the Faith and if he fulfilled the commandments out of love for the good, and not out of some base motive. This is why we must not pay attention to such things or take care to learn in advance about the future; nor should we expect recompense from God for such an effort. It is preferable for us to pray to God that He help us to vanquish the Devil.

9. Hence, let us purify our intellect, since when the soul is pure—in its natural, or prelapsarian, state—it is then capable of becoming clairvoyant and of seeing even farther than the demons, as well as a great deal more than they. For the soul will then have within it the Lord, Who is the Source and Cause of all revelation and foreknowledge, as did the soul of Elissaios, when he saw what was being done by Giezi (see IV

Kings 5:20-27). When the soul arrives at such a point of purity, it will assuredly vividly behold the spiritual powers encircling it.

10. Dreams that appear to us out of God's love for mankind have the following characteristics: They are fixed and precise vessels of revelation to a healthy soul, for which reason they do not change form and do not vary from one mental image into another. Nor, of course, do they frighten the soul or provoke laughter or glumness. They approach the soul lightly and gently, filling it with spiritual pleasure and joy. For precisely this reason, when the body awakes from sleep, the soul seeks the joy of such a dream with increased yearning and great fervor.

11. Completely contrary to these things are fantasies arising from the demons. They do not remain long in the same form; nor do they long hold to any image that does not disturb the soul. For that which they do not possess of themselves, but rather use by their own deception, they are not able to make last in dreams. In such dreams, the demons say bombastic and grand things. Frequently, having transformed themselves into soldiers, they cruelly threaten one, whereas at other times they clamor about, singing to the soul. When the mind is pure, it is able to perceive clearly who they are, on account of these transformations, and thus it raises the body from sleep, that the soul might avoid the delusion of such dreams.

12. This resistance in the soul brings joy to a person, since he has become accustomed to perceiving the perfidious intentions of the demons. For this reason, indeed, a person frequently enrages the demons against him, since, during the very dream whereby they endeavor to ensnare his soul, he checks their deception. However, it is also possible that soul-benefiting dreams from God may not produce joy in the soul, but produce, instead, a sweet sorrow and tears; this occurs among those who have advanced greatly in humble-mindedness.

13. We have, by the foregoing, set forth how we must make distinctions between good and bad dreams, as we have been taught by experienced Elders. In order for us to acquire great virtue, it suffices that we not place any trust in illusions and fantasies; for dreams are nothing other than images formed by the thoughts wandering through our mind, or, as I have also said, are delusions created by the demons, in order to ensnare us.

14. Hence, even should a revelatory dream come to our souls by God's goodness, and we do not accept it, our much-desired Jesus Christ will not be angry with us; for He knows that we paid the dream no heed out of our fear of the snares of the Devil. The distinction of which I spoke is precise; it so happens, however, at times, that our soul, having been enthralled by the Devil, is defiled without our perceiving it (something which, in my opinion, no one can avoid), whereupon the soul momentarily loses the ability to render a precise diagnosis, reckoning a good and revelatory dream unsafe and diabolic.

15. I will try to make this clear and comprehensible by the following example: A man, following a long sojourn in some foreign place, returns to his house during the night. Standing, now, before the front door of his villa, he calls for his servant to open the door. The servant, however, is not persuaded by the voice and does not open it, fearing lest it be another voice that is imitating his master's, in order to deceive him, thereby causing him involuntarily to betray his master's treasures.

16. When day dawns, not only does the master not become angry with the servant, but he even praises him highly for his desire not to lose anything of his master's possessions, having believed that his master's own voice had been a ploy.

**C. From St. Maximos**

1. Just as the mind of one who is hungry imagines bread, and the mind of one who is thirsty imagines water, so also the imagination presents a variety of foods to the glutton, figures of women to the hedonist, the honors of men to the vainglorious, gain to the avaricious, vengeance to the resentful, and the misfortune of one who is envied to the envious.

2. The same is true with the other passions. For he who is beset by passions receives impassioned thoughts into his soul, both when awake and asleep.

3. In this way, when a desire increases in our soul, then our mind, during sleep, imagines the desired matter. Again, when vexation is incited, then our mind, by way of fantasy, beholds objects and events while we sleep that produce fears and anxieties. The unclean demons,

of course, increase these passions in us, having, to that end, the collaboration of our own negligence. That is, the demons, on their part, inflame our passions, stimulating them by impassioned thoughts and dreams; the Angels, however, soothe our passions, exhorting us to cultivate the virtues.

### D. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother asked an Elder: "Father, what are nocturnal phantasms?"

The Elder replied: "My child, just as during the day the Devil distracts us with various thoughts that are alien to spiritual work, so that we might not occupy ourselves with prayer and good thoughts, so in the same way at night he attempts to trouble our mind with various fearsome phantasms, until the hater of mankind succeeds in making our nightly prayer of no benefit. For this reason, we must not pay any heed to such phantasms."

### E. From St. Ephraim

My beloved, do not believe in deceptive dreams; for such dreams have led many astray and brought down those who placed their hopes in them. Let us think about it: What measure of virtue must we reach, that we might behold visions of Angels?

## Hypothesis XXI

*That the demons do not at all know what is in the heart of man, or which passions overcome us; they can discern these only by what we say and do.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

Abba Matoes said: "Satan does not know by which passion the soul is overcome. He sows thoughts of various passions, such as fornication, backbiting, and likewise thoughts of all of the other passions, but does not know whether he will harvest them; that is, whether we will accept them and carry out the corresponding sins. When he ascertains, from the movements of the body, to which passion the soul is inclined, he supplies the soul with thoughts that feed this passion."

### B. From Abba Cassian

1. A brother asked Abba Arsenios: "Father, please tell me how evil spirits unite themselves with the soul so furtively that they can converse with it imperceptibly, interact with it, and offer it whatever suggestions they may desire? Please also explain to me the relationship between the intellect (*διάνοια*) and these evil spirits, since without the Grace of God, the intellect cannot discern what is the result of the machinations of evil spirits and what derives from our free choice."

2. Abba Arsenios replied as follows: "It is not surprising that one spirit can communicate with another without our perceiving it, or that a spirit, being invisible, can approach the soul and whisper pleasurable thoughts to it. This occurs because there exists a similarity and affinity between these spirits and the soul vis-à-vis the noetic and rational realm, and because the human soul and the noetic essence of these spirits can be defined in the same way. This is why they can communicate with each other through thoughts.

3. "Apart from this communication of thoughts, no other form of communication, such as the actual presence of one spirit in the being of

another, is conceivable. This is possible only for the Godhead, which is completely incorporeal and simple by nature and which is, for this reason, able to exist in every noetic nature, pervading its entire hypostasis and essence, encompassing all of its secret parts, and searching them. For only the Godhead is truly simple and incorporeal.

4. "Even though we say that there are spiritual natures, such as those of Angels, demons, and, likewise, of the human soul, nevertheless we cannot consider them perfectly incorporeal; they, too, have a body, though one much more subtle than ours, as the Apostle says: 'There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial' (I Corinthians 15:40); again, the same Apostle says: 'It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body' (I Corinthians 15:44).

5. "From this we may clearly infer that there is nothing perfectly incorporeal, save God alone. Only God can search the secrets of hearts and pervade every noetic nature, for He alone exists everywhere and in all things. For this reason, He alone sees the thoughts and ideas of men, as the Apostle says: 'For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight' (Hebrews 4:12-13). The Prophet-King David says, in this regard, 'He that alone fashioneth their hearts' (Psalm 32:15), while Job exclaims: 'Thou understandest the mind of men' (Job 7:20).

6. "Only God, as I have said, can know our thoughts and ideas, since He alone is incorporeal and pervades the essence of the soul. Unclean spirits can perceive what kinds of thoughts we have, though not because they exist within the soul, but because they observe certain of our behaviors or bodily movements, such as our inclination towards something, our words, and our interests. On the basis of this, they deduce the thoughts of our minds. But the evil spirits are in no way able to perceive those ideas and thoughts which have not yet proceeded from the innermost recesses of the human soul.*

7. "The evil spirits cannot know whether we have accepted even those wicked thoughts which they secretly sow in our souls, in any other way, as I said, than from bodily movements and other indications

given by the outer man. For example, when they suggest to a man thoughts of gluttony, they will only realize that he has accepted the provocation of gluttony if they see that he constantly watches the course of the sun and avidly awaits mealtime.

8. "When they suggest thoughts of fornication, they will perceive our assent if they see our eyes roving around and looking with idle curiosity at inappropriate persons or objects, or if they perceive a voluptuous bodily movement and do not see the soul valiantly resisting such suggestions. From these indications they will gather that the soul has been wounded by the darts of lust.

9. "When they sow sorrow or anger in a man's heart, and the soul accepts their seeds, the demons perceive it from the movements of the body. That is, if they see the eyes contorted and perturbed, or the face altered from its normal appearance—either pale from contraction and withdrawal of the blood or flushed from the seething of the blood around the heart as it shows on the surface of the face—the demons perceive that we have accepted such thoughts.

10. "Therefore, they investigate in detail and discover by which flaw the soul is most easily conquered. For they clearly discern in which passion each of us takes delight, when they observe that we are not disgruntled by the suggestion of the thought that engenders that passion but, on the contrary, show by our silence and calmness our fondness for this thought and our preoccupation therewith. Do not be surprised if the demons, being endowed with ethereal bodies, apprehend the dispositions of our souls from bodily symptoms. After all, there are experienced men who oftentimes ascertain the state and dispositions of the inner man from the mien, behavior, and characteristics of the outer man.

11. "You should know this, too: that we should not think that demons act upon the possessed** in such a way that they enter into the very essence of the soul and, lodging therein, emit whatever words and phrases they wish through the human mouth; this is, as I have said, in no way possible for demons. An unclean spirit does not act upon a man through some flaw in the soul, but through the weakness of the body. It casts an intolerable and immeasurable burden on those members in which the vigor of the soul resides, thereby dulling and darkening the senses of one's mind. We often see this happening as a result of drink-

ing wine, fever, excessive cold, and various other ailments that assail us from without.

12. "It is precisely this paralysis of the soul that the Devil was forbidden to inflict upon the blessed Job, even though he had received power over his flesh, as the Lord commanded him when He said: 'Behold, I deliver him up to thee; only preserve his soul' (Job 2:6). That is, 'Do not drive him mad, O Devil, by smothering the abode of his soul through your great weight and overwhelming the understanding and wisdom of the ruling faculty of his soul, which enables him to resist your wickedness.'

13. "Hence, an unclean spirit is not united with the soul in the way that it mingles with gross and material flesh, in some sense clothing itself therewith, as though it were possible for the one spirit (that of evil) to be received into the other (the soul). For this, as we have said, is possible only for the Holy Trinity. Demons assail the soul and fight against it through the inclination of the body towards the passions."

* Every Christian is aware of this truth, for we say about any good intention: "Let not the Devil hear of it and become envious."

** Literally "*energumens*" (*ἐνεργούμενοι*), a term applied to demoniacs and persons suffering from mental disorders, especially insanity, whom the early Church treated with particular compassion through the ministrations of exorcists—*Trans.*

## Hypothesis XXII

*What the measure of dispassion is, what its traits are, and how a man acquires these.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. There was a certain Elder who for fifty years did not eat bread or drink wine—save on rare occasions—and who would say (as though he had attained to dispassion): "I have mortified in myself fornication, avarice, and vainglory."

2. When Abba Abraham heard that the Elder was wont to say this, he went to him and asked him: "Did you say this?" "Yes," the Elder replied. So Abba Abraham asked him: "Let us suppose that you enter your cell and find a woman lying on your mat; are you able think she is not a woman?" "No," replied the Elder, "but I would fight against the thought, so as not to touch her." Abba Abraham said: "Then this passion has not been mortified, but is still active; it has merely been restrained."

3. Abba Abraham then asked the same Elder: "If, while walking, you should happen to come across some stones and potsherds, and gold in the midst of them, would you be able to consider the gold equal to them in worth and substance?" "By no means," answered the Elder, "but I would struggle with my thought, so as not to take the gold." Abba Abraham said: "Then this passion is still active, too, but has been restrained."

4. Once more, Abba Abraham asked: "Now, suppose you were to learn of two brethren, and one of them loved you, whereas the other hated you and spoke evil of you; if they were to visit, would you display the same attitude towards both of them?" "Certainly not," the Elder replied, "but I would struggle with my thought, in order to do good to the brother who hated me." Abba Abraham said: "Then this passion is also active like the others; it has only been restrained. Thus, it is clear that the passions are active, but are held back by those who struggle."

5. An Elder said: "A man cannot be good, even if he wants to be and

*Righteous Abba Abraham*

strives diligently to this end, unless God dwells in him. '[T]here is none good but One, that is, God' (St. Mark 10:18)."

6. Another Elder said: "If you have reached the point that you view contempt as praise, poverty as wealth, and scarcity as abundance, then you are in no danger of spiritual death. For it is impossible for one who has achieved this virtue to fall to unclean passions or to demonic delusion."

7. Abba Longinos said to Abba Akakios: "Only when her period stops does a woman find out that she is pregnant. Similarly, when the flow of the passions that drag it downward ceases, the soul knows that it has conceived the Holy Spirit within itself. But as long as one is still subject to these passions, how can he take pride in himself, as though he were dispassionate? Give blood and receive spirit" (that is, strive with all your strength to become a spiritual man).

8. A monk once met some nuns and turned aside from the road, fearing lest his thoughts tempt him. The Abbess, observing what the brother did, looked at him and said: "My child, you did well to guard yourself on account of your weakness; however, if you were a perfect monk, you would not have noticed that we were women."

**B. From Abba Isaiah**

1. Abba Isaiah said: "If you perform your religious duties, and some passion is stirred up in your heart after you have completed them, all of your labors will have been in vain; for God does not accept them."

2. One of the Fathers then asked him: "But Father, do not external stimuli smite the heart in such a way as to arouse the passions?" Abba Isaiah replied as follows: "When it rains, as long as the earth has seeds within it, they germinate. But if it lacks seeds, how can it bring anything forth? Thus does it happen also in the human soul: If one struggles to expel from his heart what is contrary to nature (that is, the seeds of the passions), the passions are no longer aroused in him.

3. "For God desires that man be like Him in all things, and for this reason He came down to earth and suffered, that He might subdue our hardened nature and cut off our willfulness and the spurious knowl-

edge that dominates our hearts. Indeed, whereas the irrational animals have preserved their own nature, man has changed his proper nature.

4. "In the beginning, when God created man, He placed him in Paradise, with sound senses established in their natural state. But when man accepted the counsel of the Devil, who deceived him, all of his senses were distorted from their natural state into a state contrary to nature, and it was then that man fell away from his spiritual potential.

5. "But our Lord took pity on our kind, on account of the great love with which He loved us, the ungrateful ones, and through His Divine Incarnation He changed man's unnatural state into a natural one. He effected this change through His Holy Body. He bestowed on us the capacity to communicate with His Divine Body through Divine Communion. In this way He brought us back again to Paradise and gave us holy commandments, which, provided we observe them, will enable us to overcome those who have estranged us from our glory and to establish ourselves once more in that natural state in which we were created at the beginning.

6. "For man's natural desire consists in his yearning for things on high; without such desire one cannot even have love for God. For this reason, Daniel was called a man of desires (his desires being directed towards things on high and not towards earthly things). Our enemy, the Devil, turned this into shameful desire, so that we lust after every kind of impurity.

7 "Zeal is a natural state of the mind; without such zeal there can be no progress towards God. This is why the Apostle Paul writes: '[C]ovet earnestly the best gifts' (I Corinthians 12:31). This zeal for God has been transformed into something contrary to nature, such that we are jealous and envious of one another and lie to each other.

8. "Anger is a natural state of the mind. Without this anger, man cannot attain to purity of soul, for he is commanded to be angry about all that the Enemy sows in his mind. But this natural anger that we should have against the Devil has been twisted into anger against our fellow men for all the ways in which they fail to benefit us.

9. "Hatred is a natural state of the mind, its purpose being that we

should hate enmity; and without such hatred integrity is not manifested in our soul. But this hatred of enmity has been turned into a hatred contrary to nature, such that we hate and abhor our neighbor, which drives all of the virtues away from the soul.

10. "Pride is a natural state of the mind, which is founded upon the hostility of the mind towards the passions, such that it should not obey, or be enslaved to, dishonorable passions. But this proper pride was altered by the Devil and transformed into arrogance towards one another and self-justification at the expense of our neighbor. For this reason, we have become enemies of God and been humiliated by our adversaries. So, as you see, from the outset these states were implanted in the human soul. But when man tasted the bitter fruit of disobedience, they were all transformed into states contrary to nature, and man became a slave to the basest of passions.

11. "He who wishes to return to his natural state must cut off all of his carnal desires and struggle until he is firmly established in that state which is according to nature. Then, the man who has struggled thus is truly dispassionate, and is justly characterized as such, and has, even in the present life, inherited the Kingdom of Heaven. For, as the Savior said, the Kingdom of Heaven is not to be found here and there, but exists within us: '[T]he Kingdom of God is within you' (St. Luke 17:21).

12. "There are some who talk about the Kingdom of God, yet do not fulfill all that they should in order to inherit it. Again, there are others who labor for the Kingdom of God, but without vigilance or knowledge. Very few—and hard to find—are those of whom the Savior says: '[T]he Kingdom of God is within you' (St. Luke 17:21). The Holy Spirit of God has visited these chosen ones, and they are indeed born of God, as St. John the Apostle says (St. John 1:13). They have cast off the image of the earthly man and put on the image of the heavenly man (I Corinthians 15:49), being transformed from glory to glory (II Corinthians 3:18) and having Christ dwelling in them through faith.

13. "'The spirit and soul and body' of these men, as the Divine Paul says (I Thessalonians 5:23), are 'blamelessly' united, through the Energy of the Holy Spirit, in such a way that they are not in opposition to each other. For this reason, their consciences neither reprove them nor accuse them and the peace of God governs their hearts and rewards them with

serenity. The enemies of the soul, the demons, can no longer do them any harm.

14. "For when the mind succeeds in beholding the sweetness of the Godhead through the eyes of the soul, the darts of the Enemy can no longer enter it, since it is clad in the panoply of the virtues, which protects it, looks after it, and does not permit it to be perturbed by anything earthly. Rather, it grants the mind the gift of fearlessly dedicating itself to the contemplation of things Divine.

15. "Let us not forget that on the path to the attainment of the virtues one may fall; but he can also get up again. After all, the soul is combatting evil and endeavoring to change its life. In this struggle for virtue, one may suffer loss, but he will also gain. In this endeavor, there is a desire for perfection and joy in waging the contest. There is toil, but there is also respite. There is hardship, but there is also progress, since this is a journey towards the attainment of one's final resting-place (at which all exertion and struggle will have ceased).

16. "Dispassion is far removed from all of these changes of the soul, and lacks nothing, since the dispassionate (passionless) man abides in God and God in him. Dispassion no longer faces enmity, is not in danger of falling, is not plagued by doubt, has no need to exert itself in vigilance, does not fear the passions, has no desire for material things, and does not feel pain from the hostility of others. Its glories are great and innumerable.

17. "But inasmuch as a man has fear over the existence of even one passion, then he is far from dispassion; and insofar as his heart accuses him, such a man is a complete stranger to dispassion. But insofar as the left does something of its own, sin has not yet died; neither can the virtues, which the right accomplishes, ensure peace in the soul of such a man. For it is written: 'Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?' (Romans 6:16). For, 'There are two ways, one of life and one of death.'*

18. "He who traverses the way of life does not walk on the other way. But he who walks on both ways has not yet decided to walk on one of the two ways; and neither has he even learned to distinguish be-

tween them, so as to avoid the one (that of death) and to love the other (that of life).

19. "For he who has known the sweetness of the glory of God has also known the bitterness of the Enemy. He who has known the purity of the Kingdom has known the impurity of the filthy passions. He who has known the fruit of the virtues has known what the fruit of vice is. Indeed, unless one eats of both, he cannot know the difference between them.

20. "How, indeed, can one understand the frenzy of avarice unless he has tasted of the spiritual respite granted by Godly poverty? How can one understand the bitterness of irascibility unless he acquires the tranquillity of meekness? How can one understand the perturbation provoked by anger unless he acquires the peace afforded by long-suffering? How can one understand the shamelessness of pride unless he acquires the circumspection of humility? How can one grasp the disturbance engendered by listlessness unless his senses are first becalmed and he thus perceives the light of God through the eyes of his mind?

21. "By the same token, one can in no way understand the remaining passions unless he acquires the virtues that are contrary to them and which eliminate them. For this reason, many spiritually ignorant people suppose that they have attained to dispassion, when there are still passions in their souls and their bodies are not completely pure."

22. The same Elder said: "This is the difficult problem: that we have dispassion on our lips, but iniquity and vice in our hearts."

23. Again, he said: "Unless a man struggles until death to make his body as pure as that which the beloved Jesus wore when He was on earth, he will not meet Jesus joyfully, nor will he be delivered from the bitter slavery (of the passions)."

24. Again, he said: "He who does not find help in time of war cannot have confidence even in a time of peace."

**C. From Abba Mark**

1. He who wishes to cross the noetic sea (of the passions) is humble-

minded, long-suffering, vigilant, and abstinent; if he attempts to enter this sea without these four virtues, he merely agitates his heart and cannot make the crossing.

2. Stillness is beneficial if it is free from evils; and if, in addition to stillness, one enlists the aforementioned four virtues in prayer, there is no quicker aid than this to the acquisition of dispassion.

3. It is not possible for the mind to be still unless the body is also still; neither can the wall that separates them be demolished without stillness and prayer.

4. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Galatians 5:17); those who walk in the Spirit shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh (*cf.* Galatians 5:16).

**D. From St. Diadochos**

1. Dispassion does not mean that we are not warred upon by demons; for in that case we would have to depart from the world, as the Apostle says (*cf.* I Corinthians 5:10). It means that we remain unconquered when they war against us. After all, warriors clad in iron armor are shot at by their enemies, hear the whistling of the arrows, and even see the missiles hurled against them; yet they are not wounded, on account of the hardness of their armor.

2. Thus, warriors clad in iron remain undefeated in the course of war. As for us, if we are armed through all of our good deeds, with the panoply of the light of the Holy Spirit (*cf.* Romans 13:12) and the helmet of the Savior (*cf.* Ephesians 6:17), we will cut down the dark legions of the demons; for it is not simply refraining from doing evil that confers purity, but, rather, forcefully rejecting evil by the cultivation of what is good.**

**E. From Abba Isaac**

**Question**

1. How does one know whether he has attained to purity of heart, and what is purity of heart?

**Answer**

2. When one sees all men as good, and none as unclean or defiled, then such a man is truly pure in heart. For every person is able to reckon, consciously and with sincerity of heart, that all men are superior to him, in accordance with the Apostolic injunction,*** if he succeeds in attaining to that perfect state expressed in the verse: "His eye is too pure to behold evils" (Avvakoum 1:13).

3. Purity, therefore, is complete obliviousness and ignorance of the ways of that state contrary to nature, which derives from disobedience and which our postlapsarian nature devised and proliferated on the basis of worldly realities. He who succeeds in transcending these things or, rather, he who expels from his soul everything that is contrary to nature and reaches the point of forgetting such things, because he deliberately ignores them and eschews involvement with them, has evidently regained the primordial simplicity and innocence of our prelapsarian nature and has become like a pure infant, though without the deficiencies of an infant.

**Question**

4. Is it possible for one to attain to this state?

**Answer**

5. Certainly. Abba Sisoes attained to this measure, even to the point of asking his disciple whether he (Abba Sisoes) had eaten or not.****

6. Another of the Desert Fathers attained to such simplicity and so utterly transcended the bounds of earthly life that he would become forgetful and would eat before Holy Communion. He would then approach to commune, without remembering at all whether he had eaten, unless he was prevented from communing by his disciples, who used to lead him like an infant to partake of the Immaculate Mysteries. To the world, this Father was an infant, but in soul he was perfect before God.

**F. From St. Maximos**

1. The soul is pure when it is freed from the passions and is unceas-

ingly gladdened by Divine love. Dispassion is a peaceful state of the soul, in which the soul is with difficulty moved to evil. When the mind is completely freed from the passions, it then proceeds unswervingly towards contemplation of existing things and ascends towards knowledge of the Holy Trinity.

2. A sign of perfect dispassion is that pure notions of things continually arise in the heart, both when the body is awake and during sleep.***** If the mind is pure, when it receives thoughts of things, it is moved to spiritual contemplation of them. But when the mind, overcome by sluggishness, becomes impure, while it forms loftier notions of other things, on entertaining notions of human beings, it turns them into shameful and wicked thoughts.

3. He who has become perfect in love and attained to complete dispassion knows no distinction between his own and another's, between believer and unbeliever, between slave and freeman, or in general between male and female. Such a man has risen above the tyranny of the passions and, observing human nature as a whole, considers all to be equal and behaves the same way towards everyone, since for him there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, male and female, or slave and freeman (*cf.* Galatians 3:28), "but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11).

4. It is one thing to be delivered from thoughts and another to be freed from passions. Oftentimes one is delivered from thoughts, when those things to which he has acquired a passionate attachment are not present. Passions are hidden in the soul, and when the things that give rise to them appear, the passions are exposed. We must, therefore, watch over the mind when those things that provoke the passions are present and determine to which thing the mind has a passionate attachment.

5. The soul is perfect when its passible faculty inclines wholly towards God (that is, when it yearns for nothing else save God alone).

6. A perfect mind is that of one who, through true faith, has acquired preternatural knowledge, in a manner beyond all unknowing, of Him Who is supremely unknowable, and who, when he beholds the totality of what God has created, receives from Him comprehensive knowledge of the providence and judgment that He works therein—as far as this is

possible for men, I mean.

7. When you say or do nothing shameful in your intellect, when you harbor no rancor towards one who has harmed or maligned you, and when, at the time of prayer, you always keep your mind free from matter and form, then know that you have attained to the measure of dispassion and perfect love.

8. Do not think that you have perfect dispassion when an object that provokes passion is not present; but when that object appears, and you remain unmoved towards it or any subsequent recollection thereof, then know that you have reached the realm of dispassion. However, do not be presumptuous, for when virtue has been present in one for a long time, it deadens the passions; but when it is neglected, they are aroused once again.

9. He who fulfills the law only through his life and conduct is free from the consequences of evil, since he sacrifices for God's sake the implementation of the irrational passions; and this mode of salvation is sufficient for him, on account of his spiritual immaturity.

10. He who is instructed by the words of the Prophets, in addition to rejecting the implementation of the passions, also refuses to give assent to those provocations that arise in his soul, so that he might not, in appearing to refrain from evil in the flesh, secretly commit it unstintingly in his soul.

11. He who genuinely embraces the Evangelical life has eradicated from himself the beginning and end of evil and pursues every virtue in both deed and word, offering a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (*cf.* Psalm 49:14; Jonah 2:10). Such a man is delivered from every sin caused by the activity of the passions and is also free from mental warfare with them, having only that insatiable delight that nourishes one's soul with the hope of good things to come.

12. A pure heart is that which presents its memory to God wholly free from form and shape, ready to receive the impress of His archetypes alone, through which the mind of Christ is wont to become manifest—that mind which the Saints receive, as the Apostle says: "[W]e have the mind of Christ" (I Corinthians 2:16). We do not acquire this

mind through deprivation of our innate mental power, or as a supplement to our own mind; nor does it pass over essentially and hypostatically into our mind. Rather, by its own quality it illuminates the power of our mind and brings it to the same activity as its own.

13. I say that he who thinks as Christ does, and thinks of Christ in all things, has the mind of Christ.

14. We are said to be the body of Christ, in accordance with the verse, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (I Corinthians 12:27). We do not do so by becoming that body through deprivation of our own bodies or, again, because He passes into us hypostatically or is divided into members and is thus apportioned among them; rather, we become that body by virtue of our similarity to the Lord's flesh, thereby shaking off the corruption of sin.

15. For just as Christ, in His humanity, is understood to be sinless by nature in flesh and soul, so also we who believe in Him, and are clothed in Him through the Spirit by our free choice, can be in Him without sin.

**G. From Abba Isaac**

1. Before you enter the city of humility, if you see yourself being given respite from the vexation of the passions, do not be self-confident, for the Enemy has set a trap for you. Expect great perturbation after a period of respite; for when you are passing through the stages of the virtues, you will not find respite from the toil of your spiritual ascent or relief from the machinations of the Enemy until you arrive at the abode of humility.

2. At the time in which humility reigns in your soul and your way of life, your soul will be subject to you, and along with your soul all things will be subject to you, for the peace that comes from God is born in your heart. But when you place yourself outside the realm of humility, you will be persecuted not only by the passions but also by incidental circumstances. For in truth, unless we voluntarily humble ourselves, God will not cease from humbling us; true humility is the offspring of temptations.

3. There are two forms of crucifixion: one is the crucifixion of the

body, while the other is the ascent to Divine vision. The first is a consequence of liberation from the passions; the second comes about from carrying out the works of the Spirit. The mind cannot be brought into subjection unless the body is first made subject to the mind.

4. The reign of the mind over a man is the crucifixion of the body. But the mind is not subject to God unless the free will is subject to the rational faculty. Whoever subjects himself—that is, his free will—to the rational faculty of the soul is close to having all things become subject to him.

5. He who knows himself has received knowledge of all things. For to know oneself is the fullness of the knowledge of all things, and when one subjects his soul (to the Will of God), all things become subject to him. It is difficult to entrust these points to a beginner and one who is an infant in spiritual development, for, as Scripture says, "Woe to thee, O city, whose king is young" (Ecclesiastes 10:16).

6. The purification of the body is holiness untainted by the defilement of the flesh. The purification of the soul is freedom from the hidden passions that are formed in the intellect; that is, spiritual vision, which comes about beyond and outside the bodily senses by the power of the Spirit and which transcends all perceptible things.

7. Newborn infants have purity in body and soul, since they have not yet been defiled by the passions and thus are pure; but purification of the mind is granted by the Spirit only to the perfect.•

* *Didache* 1:1.

** "Turn away from evil, and do good" (Psalm 33:15).

*** "[I]n lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3).

**** See Abba Sisoes, §4: "The disciple of Abba Sisoes would often say to him: 'Abba, please get up, so that we may eat.' The Elder would ask him: 'Have we not eaten, my son?' 'No, Father,' the disciple would answer. The Elder would then say: 'If we have not eaten, bring food and let us eat'" (*Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXV, col. 392D)—*Editors.*

***** St. Maximos elsewhere distinguishes between things, notions, and passions as follows: "A thing (*πρᾶγμα*), a notion (*νόημα*), and a passion (*πάθος*) are all different from each other. A thing is, for instance, a man, a woman, gold, and so forth; a notion is a mere recollection of one of the aforementioned things; a passion is an irrational affection or indiscriminate hatred for one of the foregoing. A monk's battle, therefore, is against passion" ("Third Century of Texts on Love," §42, *Φιλοκαλία*, Vol. II, p. 33)—*Trans.*

• Although, of course, it is difficult for anyone to comprehend the lofty and Di-

vinely-inspired thoughts of a virtuous and ascetic Father like Abba Isaac, we can nonetheless indicate at least some of their central points. Thus, St. Isaac describes three stages of moral and spiritual perfection: purification of the body, of the soul, and of the spirit, which is completed and crowned by sublime Divine vision. He regards humility and self-knowledge as presuppositions of any such ascent. These two presuppositions are, in turn, consequences of the subjection of all human behaviors to the mind enlightened by Divine illumination. Through all of these points, St. Isaac describes the cycle of a laborious, albeit necessary, endeavor whereby man ascends to the height of Grace. Should such an occupation really be the work and pursuit only of monastics?

## Hypothesis XXIII

*How and when one should touch upon theology; what constitutes theological wisdom and what is reckoned knowledge; what the difference is between them and how the mind is made worthy of them.*

### A. From St. Diadochos

1. Spiritual discourse* informs the noetic sense, since it comes forth from God by way of the energy of love; for precisely this reason, the spiritual mind resides, in an unquestioning manner, within these internal movements of theology and therein suffers want of nothing, which want brings about concern. Wherefore, the spiritual mind is thus much expanded in its internal vision, as the energy of the love of God permits.

2. So, it is a good thing for a man to hope with faith, energized by love, for enlightenment, that he might speak; for there is no poorer thing than a mind which philosophizes about God, yet is far from God. Nor should a man occupy himself with spiritual theorems without Divine enlightenment. And neither should he venture to speak, if he has not first shone forth with the probity of the Holy Spirit.

3. For where there is want there is also ignorance. But again, where there is richness, it impedes speech, for then the soul, intoxicated by the love of God, wishes to enjoy the glory of God, without expressing this—its happiness—in words.** One must, therefore, feel within himself the concord of energy, in order to formulate words about God.

4. This moderation gives to the soul marvellous words of the kind that express the glory of God; and the profusion of the brilliance of mind, through Divine enlightenment, nourishes the faith of the one speaking in faith, such that one who teaches first tastes, by way of the energy of love and with knowledge beyond words, the sweet fruit of the mystical experience of the spiritual mind. For, as the Apostle says, "The husbandman who laboreth must first partake of the fruits" (II St.

Timothy 2:6).

5. Our mind is constricted greatly when we pray, for it is obliged, if it wishes to pray as it ought, to limit to the least any notions or representations; contrarily, in theologizing, it is expanded thereby and joyfully applies itself to theology by virtue of the boundless expansiveness of Divine theorems.

6. So, in order not to give the mind an unchecked outlet in its desire to say much, or, indeed, that it not rise to flights beyond its measure, let us consign the greater part of the preoccupations of our soul to spiritual joy, prayer, and psalmody and spend a good deal of time reading Holy Scripture, without, however, underestimating the lofty teachings of those pious men who are empowered to give discourse and whose trustworthiness is confirmed simply by that which they say.

7. Acting in such a manner, our spiritual mind is thus so formed that it neither mixes statements of its own inspiration with those of Divine Grace nor risks, thereby, being swept away by vanity, having been dispersed by great joy and loquacity. And we will preserve the spiritual mind, in periods of contemplation, from every fantasy*** and, on this account, will attain to such a state that all of its Divine conceptions (in times of theological ecstasy) will be accompanied by tears of contrition.

8. For the spiritual mind, taking rest during times of silence, and sweetened throughout by the sweetness *par excellence* of prayer, not only remains far from the cause of the dangers to which we alluded above, but, moreover, acquires such spiritual power that, with ease of movement and without effort, it is immersed in the contemplation of Divine theorems. Likewise, with much humility it prospers in the inner knowledge of discretion.

9. The theologian, because his soul is sweetened by these words of God and he is set afire by them, thus easily approaches the breadths of passionlessness; for, as the Spirit of God says, "The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver that is fired, tried in the earth" (Psalm 11:7).

10. A man of knowledge (an intellectual), who has gained knowledge from the certainty of experience that derives from action, rises above the passions; but, as well, a theologian who maintains himself in

humility has experience of intellectual knowledge. And a man of knowledge, once more, if he keeps the discretionary ability of the soul pure, without falling to error, offenses, or delusion, also tastes, to some extent, of contemplative virtue.

11. For it is not possible for these two gifts to coexist in their fullness in one and the same individual; and this, so that these two bearers of Grace might marvel at that in which one surpasses the other, and thereby increase in their humility, together with zeal, that there might be perfected in them that fullness of virtue in which is contained all righteousness. And so, as we mentioned previously, the Apostle has said: "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:8).

**B. From St. Maximos**

1. When the spiritual mind succeeds at attaining to the cultivation of practical virtue, it prospers in prudence; but when it succeeds at the cultivation of contemplative virtue, it prospers in (spiritual) knowledge. And prudence, on the one hand, brings a struggler to the state of being able to distinguish between virtue and evil, whereas, on the other hand, knowledge introduces one who holds it to the deepest Divine principles [*τοὺς βαθυτέρους λόγους—Trans.*] of both bodiless entities and of those in the body (of material and immaterial beings). And immediately following this, he is made worthy of theological Grace, since on the wings of love he goes beyond all of the foregoing stages (of prudence and knowledge) and, finding himself near to God, examines with care, in the spirit, all that is possible to the human mind in conceiving the meaning of God.

2. When you occasion to be engaged in theology, do not ask about the Hypostatic aspects of God, for it is not possible for the human mind or any other spiritual power, aside from God, to discover these aspects of God.**** Rather, to the extent possible, examine only the *properties* of God, such as, for example, His eternality, His infinity, His indescribability, His supreme goodness, His wisdom, and His might (having creative and providential power, as well as the power of judgment, over all that is). For he who succeeds, even if to a small degree, in diligently discovering these properties and their relationship to the Essence of God, as well as their relationship to one another, is a great theologian among

men. Those things which concern the Essence of God are unknowable to any created nature.

3. Those who disdain pleasures, or who avoid them out of fear, or out of hope, or out of prudent knowledge, and out of love for God; those who are deigned worthy to know God through mystical and inner knowledge and who have richly enjoyed the pleasure that derives from this knowledge—such dismiss with contempt all of the pleasures born of the appetitive faculty of the soul.

4. He who wishes earthly goods, or desires food, or the delights of the belly, or the glory of man, or money, or anything that follows thereupon, will not be persuaded, even to the very end, to avoid any of them, if the spiritual mind has not found something more valuable than these things, so as to transfer its desire to it. Better and more valuable than all of these things, and even the Divine enjoyments, is the knowledge of God.

5. A knowledge of Divine enjoyments which is not linked to devotion to, and love of, God is not able to coax the mind to disdain material things. Such knowledge is similar to a simple thought about a perceptible thing. For this reason, it is easy for us to find many who are distinguished for their knowledge, but who nonetheless wallow in their passions, like pigs in the mud. These types, having for a short time exercised care to cleanse their mental world of the passions and evil thoughts, come to knowledge of God; however, by their negligence they come to be like Saul, who, while initially worthy of kingship was, however, afterwards removed as king by the wrath of God for having conducted himself unworthily (I Kings 9-31).

6. Just as simple thought about human things does not require the mind to set aside Divine things, in a similar way, the simple knowledge of Divine things does not demand definitively of the mind that it avoid human things, since, in this circumstance, the truth is bound up with what is nebulous and with conjecture. For this reason, such knowledge of God must be accompanied by extensive penitential sadness and with holy love, which join the mind to spiritual theorems and persuade it to prefer the immaterial over the material, as well as the Divine and the noetic over the sensory.

7. In any event, this does not mean that one who at last succeeds in cutting off the passions and transforming his evil thoughts into simple and passionless reflections has turned his mental world towards things Divine. Such a person may be devoted neither to the Divine nor to the human, which is something that can be seen in his practical actions, which are not consistent with the mystical and inward knowledge of God, but which circumvent the passions either out of fear of God and Hell or because of hope for the Kingdom of Heaven.*****

8. "For we walk being guided by faith and not by the faculties of sight" (*cf.* I Corinthians 5:7), and this mystical inner knowledge of God we acquire as though to "see reality as in a mirror, by way of allegorical and enigmatic images" (*cf.* II Corinthians 13:12). Therefore, we have need of persistent occupation with these things, that by the study of them over great time, and by the systematic repetition of internal Divine principles, we may make them matters of habit that cannot be easily torn from our soul.

9. For if, in only a small amount of time, we succeed in cutting off the causes of passions and concern ourselves with spiritual theorems, yet do not resolve to dwell constantly on them, having this as our principal occupation, we will again easily fall to the passions of the flesh, earning, as the only fruit of our efforts, nothing other than simple knowledge, and this with arrogance, upon which follows a dark and ultimately total return of our mind to material things.

10. The passion for love is most worthy of censure, when it occupies the mind with material things; on the contrary, it is most worthy of praise when it binds the mind to Divine things. For the mind is accustomed to direct love and desire to those things with which it is occupied for long periods of time, whether to notions of the Divine and related things of the soul, or to objects and passions of the flesh.

11. God created the seen and unseen world; that is, He created both the soul and the world. If, then, the world which we see before us is so good and harmonious, how perfect, indeed, must the unseen world be? And if the unseen world is so much superior to the material world, how much loftier than the both of them must be He Who created them—God? If, therefore, the Omniscient Creator of good is beyond comparison greater in goodness and kindness than all that there is, by what

logic, then, is it that the mind leaves all that is more perfect and good than all else and occupies itself with the worst of all things, by which I mean the passions of the flesh?

It is obvious that the occupation of the mind with fleshly passions explains this, since it is habitually in contact with them, on account of its instinctual (inherent) association therewith, while the sweetness of all that accrues to the supreme good, which surpasses all things, it has not yet tasted.

12. Now, if by continuous and uninterrupted asceticism we accustom ourselves to the control of (worldly) pleasures and to the study of Holy Scripture, such that little by little we disengage the mind from its interaction with the flesh, then the mind encompasses the Divine, with the result that it shortly directs its desire to the Divine, as well.

13. The whole aim of the commandments of Christ is meant to free our mind from intemperance and hatred and to guide it to the love of Him and our neighbor, from which is born the light of the action of the Holy Spirit within us.

14. From the moment that God deems you worthy of partial knowledge, take care not to be negligent in acquiring love and abstemiousness; for self-control and love cleanse that part of the soul that is liable to the various passions, always preparing one for the path to the fullness of knowledge. And the path which leads to knowledge is that of passionlessness (dispassion) and humility, without which no one is able to see God, since "knowledge," in and of itself, "is puffed up" (that is, causes pride), whereas "love edifieth" (I Corinthians 8:1-2).

15. Unite knowledge to love and you will become simple, without being puffed up by pride, and will become a good administrator of spiritual gifts. Thus you will edify yourself in a spiritual way, as well as all who approach you. In this way, love edifies: namely, one who loves in a Christ-like way does not get jealous; nor does he become embittered by envious individuals or succumb to the temptation of displaying any gift that he might have that might possibly provoke jealousy in people. Nor does he ever imagine himself to have already come to true knowledge, but admits, without embarrassment, to whatever he does not know. It is thusly that a man keeps his mind simple and of humble disposition, constantly preparing it, so that it might come to mystical

knowledge.

16. Conceit and jealousy customarily accompany knowledge, and this, indeed, from the first steps that one takes towards knowledge. Now, conceit, for its part, proceeds only from within, while jealousy, on the other hand, proceeds both from within and from without. From within—from the soul of one who is jealous—jealousy turns on those who possess knowledge; from without, contrarily, it comes forth from those who are ignorant [see this reading—"those who are ignorant"—in *Φιλοκαλία*, Vol. II, p. 47—*Editors*].

17. However, love overcomes all three of these manifestations of aggressive feelings: it overcomes conceit, in that love is never arrogant at the expense of others; overcomes inner envy, since love is not jealous; and overcomes that external envy which comes by way of others—that is, those who envy one—since love is long-suffering and always wants to do good to others. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not" (I Corinthians 13:4 and elsewhere). It is thus necessary for one who has knowledge to gird himself with love, as well, that he might maintain his mind, in every instance, unaffected by the passions and by weaknesses.

18. He who is deigned worthy of the gift of knowledge and experiences sadness, malice, or hatred for his fellow man resembles one who pierces his eyes with thorns or thistles. For this reason, knowledge must be accompanied by love.

19. If it is possible for us to have Christ dwelling in our hearts, through faith, in keeping with the word of the Apostle (Ephesians 3:17), then all of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, as well, are found hidden in our hearts. They appear in the heart to the degree that the soul is cleansed, at which task each one of us succeeds by keeping the commandments.

20. This treasury of knowledge and wisdom is hidden somewhere in the field of your heart; it has not yet been made manifest, on account of the fact that you have not been working therein. For if you had discovered it, you would have sold all that you possess to acquire this field (St. Matthew 13:44). At present, however, you have abandoned this field and are tending to those areas that surround it, that is, the needs of the

body, where you find nothing but thorns and thistles. So, cleanse your mind of anger and enmity and vile thoughts, and you will hence come to know that Christ lives in your heart.

21. All entities are called *noumena*, since the manner in which our awareness of them is born in the mind remains incapable of demonstration; God, on the other hand, is not called noumenal, for by these *noumena* man is guided to concrete faith in Him and, in respect to these *noumena*, He surpasses all of them.

22. The knowledge of entities is of necessity associated with the same Divine principles that establish their existence, by which they are naturally described. Belief that God exists comes only through the existence of the entities which He has created. The Lord confirms to those of pious confession and faith that God in fact exists, which is more powerful than any other proof of His existence. For faith is actual knowledge, the wellsprings of which are beyond demonstration, present in the heart as the evidence and substance of things beyond the mind and beyond expression (*cf.* Hebrews 11:1).

23. Those who laboriously seek knowledge, yet fail at this spiritual goal, fail either because of their faithlessness or because they become puffed up, like those without knowledge who vainly wrangle among themselves. What happens to them is that which befell the Hebrew people of ancient times, some of whom, having properly received the law, rose up against Moses and, disobeying, went up into the hills; "and the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain" (Deuteronomy 1:44), assailed them. For those who have failed and try to appear virtuous (out of necessity, only in external form) not only err by pretending to be pious, but are strongly censured by their consciences.

24. He who does not wish knowledge just for show, yet fails to acquire it, should not be jealous on account of the success of his neighbor; nor should he be saddened. Rather, let him prepare himself with success in similar virtues and capabilities of the soul, just as he earlier set out to refine his soul by bodily virtues, thereby being made ready for the knowledge which he desires.

25. God, Who has liberated us from bitter servitude to the demons that have tormented us, has granted us humility of mind as a philan-

thropic yoke of Godliness, by virtue of which, on the one hand, all of the power of the Devil is tamed and, on the other hand, those who wish it and seek after it might realize every goodness, preserving it intact, without defaming their neighbor under the influence of the demon of jealousy.

26. He who believes has fear, and he who fears is humbled. He who is made humble is peaceful and is rendered gentle, since he has become accustomed to overcoming the boundaries of nature and remaining undisturbed by the impulses of anger and of desire, which, on this account, cannot act upon him. The gentle man, moreover, keeps the commandments; and he who keeps the commandments cleanses his psychic world. And he who has cleansed his psychic world receives Divine illumination. He, in turn, who receives Divine illumination and who shines forth is afterwards made worthy to be wed to the Word, as a bridegroom, beholding with Him that inner realm of the Divine Mysteries, which is above and beyond the rational world.

27. Exactly like a farmer who, undertaking with care to find an appropriate spot for transplanting a wild tree, falls wholly unexpectedly on some treasure which he did not anticipate being hidden in the place where he was digging, so is the ascetic of humble mind, who does not seek to show off hypocritically and remains tranquil in his soul and free of material denseness. Accordingly, the blessed Jacob, when asked by his father about the art of this unforeseen joy—"How is it that thou hast found it so quickly?"—answered, "Because the Lord thy God brought it to me" (Genesis 27:20).

28. For when our Lord and God bestows upon us the theorems of His heavenly wisdom, even though we did not expect to enjoy such a gift without toil, we imagine that we have discovered by surprise an unforeseen spiritual treasure. This is because the diligent ascetic is a spiritual farmer who, taking care to beautify by spiritual plantings the sensible realm of what is seen, in the course of these efforts discovers, wholly unexpectedly, a treasure; and this treasure is the manifestation to him, by Grace, of the wisdom that exists in all beings.

29. Those who correctly and piously observe all beings in order to understand them, without thinking in any way to display human vainglory, will surely discover the most brilliantly illuminated aspects of all

such beings and, approaching them, will convey to them a most exact and unerring knowledge. About these pious observers the Law says: Having come (to the promised land), you have inherited "great and goodly cities, which thou laborest not to build, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledest not, and wells digged in the rock, which thou diggedest not, vineyards and olive trees which thou plantedst not" (Deuteronomy 6:10-11; Nehemiah 9:25). For he who does not live for himself, but for God, is made rich with all of the Divine gifts, which were before not manifest, on account of the disturbance of the passions at any and all moments.

30. The soul can in no way attain to the knowledge of God if God, by extreme condescension, does not encompass it and raise it up to Himself; for the mind of man can alone never rise to such an incomprehensible height, that he might perceive such Divine brilliance, except that God Himself should give him rest (to the extent that it is possible for the human mind to find rest) and wholly illumine him with Divine radiance.

31. He who has fulfilled the works of righteousness at last passes into rest, where he is given mystical contemplation. In this state, having contained within himself the Divine principles of all things, he at last finds rest, in the innermost working of his mind, concerning these Divine principles.

32. The stages of perfection of the soul are three, analogous with three days of the week (of creation): the sixth, the seventh, and the eighth. The sixth day is the perfect achievement, in one's actions, of all of the natural powers that accrue to virtue. The seventh day is the perfecting and enjoyment, through contemplation, of all of the natural concepts that constitute the highest mystical knowledge of virtue, surpassing all possible expression. The eighth day is the transmogrification of the worthy and their journey towards *theosis* [divinization or union, through Grace, with God—*Trans.*].

33. He who succeeds in coming, as God deigns, to the sixth day with good works and lofty thoughts and who, by the aid of God, has completed well his (spiritual) work, passes, through understanding, beyond all that has physical and temporal substance and comes into the mystical contemplation of everlasting good things and of all ages, taking

respite spiritually, on the seventh day, in the universal and transcendent contemplation, beyond all knowledge, of all that is.

34. He who is deemed worthy to reach the eighth day is resurrected from the dead. I mean by this that he is delivered from all sensory things, all thoughts, all words, and all concepts that are found outside God. He also is one who has succeeded in living the blessed life of God, which alone, in fact, exists for him, such that he becomes a god by Grace, since the legacy of those who are worthy is God Himself. One who is worthy of this Grace will find himself above all ages, beyond time and space, delighting—as his place of rest—in God Himself, consistent with the written passage, "Be Thou unto me a defending God, and a strong hold to save me" (Psalm 70:3).

35. Richness of virtues, which is accomplished in their practical application, is necessary for all of those who have knowledge. For, as the Lord says in the Holy Gospel, he who has a purse, that is, knowledge and virtue, let him take upon himself a sack, that is, an abundance of virtues, which lavishly sustain the soul. He who does not have a purse, let alone a sack, that is, knowledge and virtue, let him sell his garment and buy a sword (*cf.* St. Luke 22:36).

36. This means that one should eagerly submit his flesh to hardships and labors for the sake of the virtues and wisely wage war, for the sake of Godly peace, against the passions and the demons; that is, acquire the habit—which comes forth from continual study of the words of God—of distinguishing the worse from the better.

37. Inasmuch as, like all of the creatures of God, we have not emerged in a pure state from the realm of our existence, we have not yet acquired the habit of remaining stable in virtue, without being turned towards evil. When, not only out of God's love for us, but from our persistent love, we succeed in achieving such status, then we will know the power of God's promise. For the worthy must believe that *there*—where the power of the mind, through love, has cast its anchor—they find a firm foundation. For he who has not, in his spiritual journey, succeeded in coming out of himself, from that realm wherein the mind is wont to be captured, and has not entered into that land that surpasses all that is knowable—such a one can never be wholly free.

38. The great Moses, having set up his tent outside the encampment of the Hebrews (which means that he turned his thoughts and his mind far away from things visible), set out to worship God. However, when he entered into the cloud (representing the immaterial realm of knowledge without form), he stayed there and performed with mystical compunction the most sacred rites (see Exodus 33:7 and following).

39. The cloud is the bodiless state, the immaterial, and that which is beyond all form, in which realm man encounters true knowledge of all that is and in which, once finding himself there, he grasps, like another Moses, through mortal nature the immortal mysteries. By way of this transcendent state, one who is worthy thereof imprints upon his soul the beauty of the Divine virtues, having as his easily imitated prototype the image of the archetype of beauty; and then, descending from this spiritual height, he holds forth, without his striving for such, as an example for those who wish to imitate his virtue, manifesting in this way the gift which he has gained, philanthropy, and the abundance of the Grace of God.

40. The Word of God, like a mustard seed, appears very small; but once it is planted—as it should be—in good soil, it shows itself to be such a very large plant. There come to rest on its branches, like birds, the Divine principles of all of the mental and sensible things of creation (St. Matthew 13:31-32; St. Mark 4:30-32; St. Luke 13:18-19). This is not hyperbole, for the Divine principles of all created things are contained within the very Word of God, while not a single one of these Divine principles is sufficient to contain the word of the Divine.•

41. And so it is that Holy Scripture says that he who has faith the size of a grain of mustard seed can, with a single word, move a mountain (St. Matthew 17:20). This means that, as long as we have faith, we can repulse the power of the Devil, who works constantly against us, and raze his power to the foundations—that is, his ways of evil, which are difficult to move.

42. The manna which was given to the Israelites during their journey in the wilderness (Exodus 16:13-35) was the Word of God, which enabled those eating thereof to enjoy every spiritual delight. By the same token, the Word of God, according to the specific desire of those partaking of it, has the mystical peculiarity of satisfying every taste. For

it contains the qualities of every spiritual food; and for this reason, it becomes, in one instance, to those born from on high from an imperishable seed, the pure milk of reason (I St. Peter 2:2 and Hebrews 5:12-13); to those who are sick in soul, in another instance, it is a therapeutic herb prescribed for the restoration to life of the depleted power of the soul; and in yet another case, to those who exercise the sensible parts of the soul with the goal of discerning the good from what is evil, the Word of God provides "strong food" (Hebrews 5:14).

43. The Word of God has other countless powers that cannot be accommodated here. Once one is freed (from worldly and earthly desires) and becomes worthy of many, if not all, of the spiritual charisms, he will then also take on all of these powers of the Word of God; or, again, various of them, if he has become, even in the slightest, faithful in this life. Yet the greatest perfection in Divine gifts which is given in the present life to the most faithful servant of God is something far less and mediocre by comparison to those future things that will be revealed to him in the future life.

44. Every word of God is expressed neither with many words nor in prolixity; contrarily, each word is single, distinguished by its simplicity, and made up of many different theorems, each of which is part of the word; thus, he who speaks of the truth, if he succeeds in saying something without excluding anything that applies to the subject in question, has expounded on a complete word of God.

45. Just as our own discourse, which comes forth from our minds by natural and rational consequence, is the proclaimer of the movements hidden in our minds (which makes these movements known and announces them to a third party), in some such way the Word of God knew the Father in essence, just as a word knows the mind that gives birth to it, so that no man can understand Him without the Word of God. The Word of God reveals to man the Father, Whom He, as the Word of the Father, knows by nature.

46. Just as straight lines which extend outward from the center of a circle are at their point of derivation considered inseparable, so it is with those who, by virtue and spiritual exercise, have been made worthy to reach the center of all creation, God; they will know through God the pre-existent Divine principles of all that is, in a single and inseparable

relationship to the Creator.

47. It is a good thing for us to occupy ourselves with, and search out, God continually (St. Matthew 6:33, 7:7-8, St. Luke 12:31, and elsewhere). This is because we cannot, in this life, hope to come to the highest stage of knowledge of God; however, if even in a limited way we succeed in coming near to this Divine profundity, we shall directly see, through the spiritual eyes of our soul, those things that are the holiest of the Holy and the most spiritual of the spiritual. This possibility of spiritual ascent, as well as this vision, little by little, of the wondrous glory of God, to the extent possible to man, are conveyed symbolically by the High Priest of the Old Testament, who entered into the Holy Place, which was holier than the outer court, into the Holy of Holies, which was holier than the Holy Place.••

48. Since, for our sake, the Word of God descended, by Providence, to the lower parts of the earth and rose above all the Heavens and above all principalities, all authorities, all powers, and every name named, whether in this world or in the future age (even though He is, according to His Divine Nature, immovable), working out first in Himself, according to His Human Nature and by Providence, all that will happen to those who are saved, let one who receives the love of knowledge have these things before him, that he might receive the inner, mystical joy of the spirit, looking to that splendid end which the Lord promises and assures to those who love Him.••• For all of those things, names, and ranks below God shall be inferior to those who become gods by Grace.

49. Lifting up within us the Word of God, by way of action and contemplation, we place before Him all things concerning the flesh and the soul and all that is natural to existing things, sanctifying even the body and the senses by virtue and knowledge and submitting ourselves, wholly by our will, to His (light and virtuous) yoke.

50. Let one who beholds, then, these Divine and noetic states purposely and with eagerness undertake to follow the Word, until he reaches that place in which the Word dwells; for it is to that point, where He is present, that the Word beckons our own human nature, as it is said in Ecclesiastes (Ecclesiastes 1:5). As well, we find an image of our evolution in holiness towards our encounter with the Word in the type of the High Priest, who, as it is known, moved from the outer court of the Temple

*The Tabernacle of Witness* (reproduced from an ancient Icon)

to the Holy Place, from which he entered the Holy of Holies, wherein, as a human, the Word Himself entered, as a Prodrome, on our behalf.••••

51. He gives the word flesh and a material hypostasis who, for the sake of moral instruction, uses examples and the simplest of words, condescending, thereby, to the low spiritual plane of those who hear him; on the other hand, he who excels in mystical theology dematerializes the word, using as his inexpressible medium lofty spiritual theorems to spiritualize it.

52. Such is one who, like the Patriarchs (of Israel), has learned, through action and contemplation, to reach deeply into those things that are found in the wells of knowledge of his inner world. Assuredly, he will find Christ therein, Who is the Wellspring of Life, from which we are exhorted by the wisdom of God to drink: "Drink," we are told, "waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well" (Proverbs 5:15). If you do, indeed, respond to this exhortation, you will find the treasures of this wisdom, which treasures are within us.

53. Let us recall the Disciples of the Lord, who, out of fear of the Jews, sat in the upper room, having first locked the door (St. John 20:19). This scene from the Gospel, beyond its historical aspect, symbolizes the following: they, by the gift of revelations, had surely ascended to the heights of spiritual contemplation, having closed the senses (as one closes the door of a building), for fear that evil spirits might enter in. Approaching (the Divine) with intuitive knowledge alone, without having been guided by (external) knowledge, they suddenly beheld the appearance of the Word of God to them, without any sensory energy.••••• It is then that the Word of God grants passionlessness, as a gift to souls thus enlightened, by the peace from above and the distribution of spirits by inspiration, imparting to such (God-inspired) persons authority over the evil spirits and making known, in a parallel manner, the symbols of His mysteries.

54. Having a rosy countenance and beautiful eyes, as the Scripture says of the great David (I Kings 17:42), he who, with the gift of a life in God, is joined with the word of knowledge, wherein there are both practice and contemplation, shines in practice with virtues and is enlightened in contemplation by Divine concepts.

55. He who asks to receive heavenly bread from God is not given this in full, but according to the measure of his spiritual and moral accomplishments. The Bread of Life,† Who is a lover of mankind, is given to all. However, not all receive thereof to the same degree. Those who have achieved great works of righteousness draw greater spiritual benefit from the Bread of Life; and again, those who have labored less in the works of righteousness derive less benefit therefrom. Each one, that is, is able to receive the Bread of Life in accordance with the spiritual worthiness of his spiritual mind, in accordance with its purity.

56. The Word of God is called a door, indicating the path of the virtues to those who have trodden the irreproachable road of spiritual action; and opening into the realm of knowledge, it reveals as light the gleaming treasures of wisdom. The Word of God is also a way, a gate, a key, and a kingdom. It is a way, since it leads; a key, since it opens to those who are worthy of Divine things the door to knowledge, which is opened up to them for understanding; it is a gate, since it admits; and finally, it is called a kingdom, for they (the worthy) inherit it, wherein unto all it is given to participate in Him.

57. Moreover, the same Word of God is called the light, life, the Resurrection, and truth.†† It is called the light, for it shines in the soul and drives away the darkness of ignorance, enlightening the mind, so that it might understand secret things and reveal to the soul mysteries beyond this world and the senses, which mysteries are seen, through the eyes of the soul, only by those who are pure. The Word of God is called life, since it imparts to the souls of those who love the Lord the facility to function in the realm of Divine concepts. It is also called the Resurrection, for it raises up the spiritual mind from dead efforts to attain material ambitions and preserves it in purity from the manifold ways of destruction and morbidity.

58. And lastly, the Word of God is called truth, since it bestows on the worthy the gift of steadfast and unyielding custom (doing good things), during that time when the soul is ascending upward from power to power and from glory to glory, something which shows forth in ever-greater advancement from virtue to virtue and an ever-higher ascendency from knowledge to knowledge. According to the stages of this course of ascent, the soul is continually transformed in its journey, in keeping with the written word: "My soul hath long been a sojourner"

(Psalm 119:6).

59. For the soul's spiritual course towards perfection is of long duration, as is the course toward the fullness of knowledge through which it behooves the soul to pass, until it comes "unto the place of Thy wondrous tabernacle, even to the house of God, with the voice of rejoicing and thanksgiving, the sound of those who keep festival" (Psalm 41:5). The soul is always joyous during this course, adding to these spiritual exultations noetic exultation at the spiritual advancement which comes forth from the Divine and conceptual visions that one is rendered worthy to behold through the purified spiritual mind. This state of spiritual joy and pleasure, mingled with the rejoicing that the spiritual mind feels by reason of what it contemplates, that is, this state of singular joy alone, creates a place of unique festivity where the worthy not only rejoice, but thank God for these Divine gifts.

60. It is in these kinds of feasts that those who have taken into their hearts the spirit of Grace make festival, crying forth from a profoundly contrite enthusiasm, "Abba, Father" (St. Mark 14:36).

61. He who has succeeded in achieving purity of heart will be able to know, not only the Divine principles of things inferior and subsequent to God, but will also see God Himself, through the eyes of the soul, in the depths of the spiritual mind (albeit dimly), having formerly, to some extent, encountered Him in all living things. Such a vision of God by the spiritual mind constitutes the supreme zenith in the ascent to the virtues and the sought-after end of the most precious of them.

62. When a man is found at the extreme zenith of perfection, God then honors this man by engraving (in his heart), as on the tablets of Moses, by way of the spirit, the same letters, that is His own seal, and this mystical and noetic engraving becomes yet deeper and more durable, to the extent that the (heart) thrives in practice and contemplation, in accord with the commandment that directs us to increase spiritually.†††

63. For whatever time a man finds himself in this present life, and however perfect his spiritual state may be here, he nonetheless has knowledge only in part and prophecy in part, as one betrothed to the Holy Spirit, and not the fullness of [Divine] gifts. When one day, after

the end of the age of this life, at the final day, when there will be revealed to the worthy, face to face, all of the truths that there are (one by one), then a man will no longer know only part of all that is, but, being transformed, will know the totality of the fullness of Grace.

64. For, as the Apostle Paul says, all—that is, all those who are saved—will come "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13), in Whom are found the treasures of knowledge and of wisdom; and "that which is in part shall be done away" (I Corinthians 13:10).

65. Many ask to learn what the state of perfection will be for those who are deemed worthy to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Where is perfection found? In advancement and going forth (that is, the going forth of the soul towards perfection), or in one's harmony with his soul, when he reaches a permanent state of the fulfillment of perfection? How should we look at the future state of our bodies and of our souls?

66. In answer to these questions, it is possible for one, philosophizing and ruminating, to reply as follows: The resolution of the matter we may see indirectly, by way of the principle of analogy, in the nourishment of our material bodies. As it is well known, the reason that we partake of bodily nourishment is twofold: the first anticipates the growth, and the second the sustenance, of those being nourished. For, until that point at which we achieve the fullness of the development and formation of the body, we eat for the sake of growth; but when the body reaches its measure of physiological development, then it is no longer nourished in order to grow, but in order to sustain itself.

67. The same thing happens with the soul. The reason for its nourishment is also twofold. Now first, it is nourished by virtue and the things of contemplation, in order to attain spiritual development and to come "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). Having previously gone beyond all created things, through spiritual knowledge, when it reaches this point, the soul is now found above all need to succeed at applying itself to growth by the foregoing means, being directly fed by nourishment beyond understanding.

68. For this reason, this kind of imperishable food no longer aids one in the growth of the soul towards perfection, but in the sustenance

of the perfection allocated to the soul, which by Grace makes one like unto God; and partaking of this sustenance, the soul succeeds at manifesting the infinite splendor of the rays of light emanating from this food, wherein the eternal and everlasting immutability of a supermundane happiness settles permanently within it. Then such a man comes to be, by participation in Divine Grace, a god.

69. In this marvellous circumstance, the mental and sensible energies of the soul come to a halt, and the soul experiences anew, along with the body, the consequences of the natural energies of divinization (*theosis*), such that God is apparent both in the soul and the body, the two coming to triumph in the abundant natural signs (of *theosis*).

70. The different eternal mansions and promises cited in Scripture refer, according to some, to different extant places, while according to others they characterize the different state of each particular mansion, with regard to the quantity and quality of the spiritual strength thereof. However, he who understands what is meant by "the Kingdom of God is within you" (St. Luke 17:21) and "In my Father's house are many mansions" (St. John 14:2) will consider the second view more correct (i.e., that the differences between eternal mansions and promises reside in the spiritual quality and quantity of each mansion).

**C. From Abba Isaac**

1. There is knowledge which comes forth from faith and knowledge which is born of faith. That knowledge which comes forth from faith is acquired by the discernment of physical entities and is found in nature and its creations: the discernment of good from evil, without the aid of a special kind of education.†††† This natural knowledge, implanted in all, is shown forth and increases by way of learning, and there is no person without this kind of knowledge.

2. However, he who, by his pleasure-loving and passionate will, obfuscates and buries this knowledge has already been deprived of its benefit and power to guide him. Such a one has also lost the honor with which God adorned human nature and has become like the dumb beasts, which have no sense and are, therefore, unable to distinguish good from evil. To such a man belongs the righteous chastisement of the Prophet David, when he says: "But man being in honor, under-

standeth not; he is compared to the senseless cattle, and is become like unto them" (Psalm 48:21).

3. By contrast, he who guards this knowledge and who without ceasing examines it diligently with his mind finds, through it, the path of God and is led by the hand to faith. For, having acquired the spiritual ability to discern good from evil, it has already been demonstrated to him, by natural means, that he should believe in God, Who created all things, as well as in His commandments, applying them to his life.

4. It is from faith thus formed that the fear of God is born, which impels a man to repent and to observe the commandments of God. And a man is therefore made worthy by God of spiritual knowledge, which consists of sensing the mysteries (of God).††††† This spiritual knowledge is not born of fear (for how can there be produced by birth that which something does not by nature have existing in itself?), but is given by God to the man who, by works of repentance, is worthy of it, it being the result of God's Grace, which is given to those betrothed to God by Holy Baptism.

5. Subsequently, from this spiritual knowledge there is born another form of faith, the faith of true contemplation. This faith does not stand in opposition to the earlier form of faith, but is, rather, the certification and the ratification of that faith. For with regard to the first kind of faith, man learns about the things of God and comes to know Him by what he hears. As for the faith which follows, therein is revealed to the soul of man the true knowledge of God, which is surer than what is merely learned of God through hearing of Him. Of this, through faith and by true knowledge, the Prophet Job was deemed worthy. After his victory over temptations, he said to God: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee" (Job 42:5).

* Spiritual discourse and theology denote the direct understanding, by the spiritual mind, of the Essence or the Nature of God, without any sort of human instruction. Such knowledge, which surpasses all knowledge, deriving from the manifestation of the love of God for man, constitutes a revelation and fills the soul with joy and happiness.

** This viewpoint reminds us of the observation of St. Gregory the Theologian, according to which, "[T]he Divine is experienced in silence," and that of St. Paul, "[T]he spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).

*** Contemplation=the inner vision of Divine images; fantasy=the inner vision of

false visions that lead to delusional entrapment.

**** The Divine principles [λόγοι] "pertaining to God," or (as we render it) the Hypostatic aspects of God, are the basic principles of His Existence and Essence. These are, however, wholly unapproachable by the human mind. For this reason, St. Maximos advises that we not concern ourselves with forming ideas about the Essence of God—which is impossible for men—but solely with understanding His properties.

***** The avoidance of the passions derives either from fear or from hope (practical motives), or from internal and mystical knowledge (contemplation).

• The Divine principles of created things are rational explications of their provenance and hypostasis. Since God is the Creator of all things, the rational explications of the provenance and hypostasis of existing things are enhypostatized in the word of God. By the word of God is meant, in this context, the specific and preternatural knowledge of God by supernal enlightenment, which fills the heart of the believer.

•• The Tabernacle of Witness of the Jews, and later the Temple, was divided into the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. This division, according to this ascetic Father, corresponds to the stages of the mystical perfection of the soul, when it succeeds in approaching no more than a manifestation of the depth of the Godhead.

••• Our Lord Jesus Christ, according to His Divine Nature, as God, is immovable; according to His Human Nature, however, He moved upon the earth, working out in Himself all of those things that happen to those who act according to the Word of God. One who holds before him delight in mystical knowledge should be joyous, anticipating his final ascent to the Glory of God.

•••• This is, apparently, an allusion, in keeping with the spirit of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 9:11-12), to the Person of the Savior (the Word), in parallel with the symbolism of the tent and the High Priest of Jewish observance.

••••• This reference is to inner enlightenment, which takes the form of a concrete revelation from God and clear knowledge from Him, coming directly from God without involvement by the senses (sight and hearing) in the formation of this internal experience.

† The Bread of Life is our Lord Jesus Christ (St. John 6:35, 48), Whom man tastes not only mystically (according to the action of mystical contemplation) but practically (in the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist). However, the energy of this tasting depends on the measure of the spiritual abilities of the one doing the tasting.

†† "I am the light of the world" (St. John 8:12); "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (St. John 14:6); "I am the resurrection and the life" (St. John 11:25).

††† An allegorical interpretation of the commandment of God: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28, 7:17, 9:1, 7). See references to spiritual increase in the New Testament, as well (Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 1:10, 2:19; I St. Peter 2:2; II St. Peter 3:18).

†††† Regarding this kind of knowledge, Holy Scripture also speaks, as follows: "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Romans 1:20); "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaimeth His handiwork" (Psalm 18:2); "For the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law" (Romans 2:14).

††††† By the word "sensing," here, is meant internal vision, by which a man, through the mind, sees future things as being present and clarifies the meaning of things that lie beyond rationality and thought.

## Hypothesis XXIV

*How and whence the mind becomes a partaker of the Grace of God and is led up to the vision of God, and how it is maintained in this state of Grace.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Arsenios said: "If we seek God, He will manifest Himself to us, and if we hold to Him, He will abide within us."

2. A brother asked an Elder: "How should we cultivate the soul so that it bears fruit?" The Elder replied: "Cultivation of the soul entails stillness of the body, a great deal of bodily prayer, and not paying attention to the falls of other people, but only to our own. If a man persists in these endeavors, it will not be long before his soul bears fruit."

3. Abba Poimen said: "When the soul withdraws from all disputation with other men and from the confusion and perturbation of human affairs, then the Spirit of God visits it. Then it will be able to give birth, whereas before it was barren."

4. On one occasion, when Zacharias, the disciple of Abba Silouan, was leaving to perform an errand, he said to the Elder: "Father, please open the cistern and water the garden." The Elder went out of his cell, in order to carry out this task. However, he so fully covered his face with his *koukoulion* (monastic veil) that he could only see his footsteps; and in this way he watered the garden.

5. It so happened that a brother visited him at that time. When the brother saw him from afar, he noticed what the Elder was doing. After entering the Elder's cell, the brother said to him: "Tell me, Abba, why did you keep your face covered with your *koukoulion* while you were watering the garden?" The Elder then replied to him: "Lest my eyes see the trees and my mind be engrossed in them, forsaking its proper noetic activity."

*Abba Silouan*

6. A brother asked Abba Sisoes: "I wish to guard my heart and I cannot." The Elder replied to him: "How are we to guard our heart when we keep our tongue, the door of the heart, wide open?"

7. Some brothers once asked Abba Silouan: "What sort of life have you pursued, Father, to acquire such wisdom?" The Elder replied: "I have never allowed into my heart any thought that would anger God."

8. Abba Sisoes was once sitting in his cell. When his disciple knocked on the door, the Elder shouted: "Go away, Abraham, do not come in; I am not free at present."

9. A brother asked Abba Moses: "I see an obstacle before me, and I cannot overcome it." The Elder replied: "If you do not become dead like those buried in the tombs, you cannot overcome it."

10. A brother asked an Elder about the following matters, to which he received the ensuing responses.

**Question**

11. What kind of work should the heart perform, in order to achieve prudence and concentration?

**Answer**

12. This is the perfect work of a monk: always to be attentive to God without distraction.

**Question**

13. But evil thoughts do not allow the mind to be always attentive to God; how, then, should the mind expel these thoughts?

**Answer**

14. The mind cannot do this entirely by itself, for it does not have such power. When thoughts assail the mind, the monk should immediately have recourse to God, and He will dispel them like wax; for our God is a consuming Fire (Deuteronomy 4:24; Hebrews 12:29).

**Question**

15. Why, then, did the Fathers of Sketis use the technique of rebutting evil thoughts?*

**Answer**

16. This is a great and exceptional task—one that is laborious and not safe for everyone.

**Question**

17. Why is this technique not safe for everyone?

**Answer**

18. When a thought attacks the soul and the latter, after struggling hard, is able to expel it, another thought enters and takes hold of it. And so it is that the soul, by rebutting the movements of thoughts the whole day long, never has time to enjoy the vision of God.

**Question**

19. By what technique does the mind take refuge in God?

**Answer**

20. If the thought of fornication comes to you, immediately retract your mind and make haste to raise it aloft to God, without tarrying; for tarrying is tantamount to assent.

**Question**

21. If the thought of vainglory assails you, should the mind not contradict it?

**Answer**

22. Whenever one contradicts a thought, that thought at once becomes stronger and more vehement; for the thought can find more ways of gainsaying you than you can of gainsaying it, and the Holy Spirit will

not come to your aid so effectively, since you will come across as boasting and as thinking that you are sufficient unto yourself to fight against the passions. You should, instead, have recourse to God.

23. Just as one who has a spiritual Father entrusts all of his cares to his Father and himself remains completely free from anxiety, so also in your case, when you surrender yourself to God, you should not be at all concerned about thoughts, or rebut them, or afford them any means of entry. If a thought does enter, lift it up to your Father and say to it: "I have nothing to do with you; look, here is my Father—He knows how to deal with you." And while you are still bearing it aloft, it will abandon you in the middle of the road and take flight. For it cannot come with you to your God and Father or stand in His presence. There is no more effective or more convenient technique than this in the entire Church.

**Question**

24. How is it, then, that the Fathers of Sketis pleased God by their rebuttal of evil thoughts?

**Answer**

25. It is because they used this technique with simplicity, and with fear of God, that God came to their aid; and subsequently, by God's good pleasure, on account of their great toil and love for Him, the activity of spiritual contemplation came to them.

26. I know this from my own experience—said the Elder—for once, when I went to Sketis, I visited a certain holy man who had lived there for many years. He arose and greeted me. After we had seated ourselves, he said absolutely nothing to me but resumed plaiting a rope, neither raising his head nor paying any heed to me. For my part, I sat in silence, devoting myself to contemplation, and that is how the day passed. He did not even invite me to eat, but remained the entire day looking down and weaving, despite not having eaten for six days.

27. The following day, around the tenth hour,** he responded to me and asked: "Brother, whence did you learn this activity?" I said to him: "We were taught this activity of ours from an early age by our Fathers."

He then said: "I was not taught any such activity by my Fathers, but as you see me now, this is how I have passed my whole life, doing a little handiwork and engaging in a little meditation, cleansing myself as far as possible of evil thoughts and rebutting thoughts that assailed me; and in this way did the spirit of Divine vision come upon me, without my knowing or even learning that there were some monks who had a similar practice." I replied to him: "I was taught this work from my youth."

**Question**

28. In what way ought such a monk apply himself to contemplation?

**Answer**

29. As the Divine Scriptures teach us; for Daniel saw God noetically as the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:9, 13, 22), Ezekiel saw Him being borne upon the throne of the Cherubim (Ezekiel 9:3; 10:18-19), Isaiah saw Him sitting upon a high and exalted throne (Isaiah 6:1), while Moses "endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27).

**Question**

30. How can the mind behold what it has never seen?

**Answer**

31. Have you never seen the Emperor sitting as he is represented in pictures?

**Question**

32. And ought the mind depict the Divine to itself?

**Answer**

33. Is it not better to depict God to oneself than to assent to unclean thoughts?

**Question**

34. Is this not perhaps considered a sin?

**Answer**

35. For now, retain in your mind the representations of God which the Prophets saw and which they set forth in their historical accounts; hereafter, the very perfection of Divine vision (preternatural and supersensory) will come to you, as the Apostle says: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face" (I Corinthians 13:12). It is evident that by "then" the Apostle meant the state after the dissolution of the body. However, when the mind is perfected, even here on earth it enjoys the clear vision of God.

**Question**

36. Does this state not entail a wandering of the mind?

**Answer**

37. Not at all, if one truly struggles. For example, I remember that I once spent an entire week—said the Elder—without calling to mind anything human. Another Elder related the following story to me: "I was once walking on a road (engrossed in contemplation) and I saw two Angels walking with me, one on either side, and I paid no attention to them."

**Question**

38. Why did he pay no attention to them?

**Answer**

39. Because Scripture says: "Neither Angels nor spirits will be able to separate us from the love of Christ" (*cf.* Romans 8:38-39).

**Question**

*An Abba in the midst of Angels*

40. Is the mind always able to remain in a state of spiritual vision?

**Answer**

41. Even if not always, still, when the mind is overwhelmed by the passions, let it not tarry in fleeing to God for refuge by means of noetic prayer. For I tell you that, if the mind is perfected in this, it is easier to move a mountain than to make the mind descend from spiritual vision. For just as a man who has been imprisoned in darkness, when he is released and sees the light, no longer wants to remember the darkness, so also is it with the mind: when it begins to see its own radiance, it does not wish to withdraw even to a small extent from this radiance.

42. One of the Holy Fathers said in this regard: "I once desired to test my mind, to see whether if I let it go into the world it would wander around. When I released it, it remained in the same place, not knowing where to go, until I raised it back aloft again. For it knew that if it went off and wandered around, I could restrain it. This activity is accomplished by silence, in conjunction with humility, and by mental prayer. For unceasing prayer in humility swiftly brings the mind to perfection."***

**B. From Abba Isaiah**

1. Brethren, let us take as our example the beloved Jacob, who was obedient to his parents in all circumstances, in accordance with the Will of God, and who, after receiving his father's blessing, went away to Mesopotamia. First, he came to a place called Bethel, which means "house of God," and there he fell asleep (Genesis 28:1-11).

2. During the night, in a revelatory vision, he saw a ladder which reached from Heaven to earth, on which Angels of God were ascending and descending: "And the Lord stood upon it" (Genesis 28:12-13). This vision of Jacob is a sign that symbolizes those who approach to serve God. In the beginning, the archetype of the virtues is revealed to such a person; but insofar as he does not labor to practice them, he does not succeed in attaining to God.

3. After waking up from his dream, Jacob made a covenant with God and agreed to be His servant. God strengthened him and said to him:

"And, behold, I am with thee to preserve thee continually" (Genesis 28:15). Jacob then went to Mesopotamia to find a wife from among the women of that place and to beget children. When he saw Rachel, he fell in love with her and, in order to win her, served her father for seven years. In spite of this, however, Rachel was not given to him, until he first took Leah to wife. For this reason, he worked for another seven years, and then Rachel was given to him. Yet, Rachel remained barren (Genesis 29:1-31).

4. The allegorical interpretation of this story is as follows. The land is called Mesopotamia, because it is located in between two rivers; the first is called "Tigris" and the second "Euphrates." Tigris means discretion and Euphrates humility. Leah symbolizes bodily exertions for the purpose of spiritual ascent; Rachel symbolizes true vision. These things happen to a man who is in Mesopotamia, meaning that a man who struggles ascetically must put forth bodily exertions through discretion, since only such exertions are a match for the scheming of the Enemy, and with the aid of humility they lead a man to true vision.

5. However, Rachel did not bear him any children until Leah had given birth to all of her children (Genesis 29:31-30:23). This signifies that unless a man fulfills all of the virtues of the practical life, his mind is not freed to ascend to genuine vision.

6. Both women were lawful spouses of Jacob. Nevertheless, he loved Rachel more than Leah, because Leah had weak eyes, while Rachel was very beautiful (Genesis 29:17).

7. The allegorical meaning of this, that Jacob's first wife had weak eyes, is that a man eagerly performs the bodily labors of asceticism, but still does not enjoy the glory of true vision, because he must feel enmity towards those works of ascesis that give rise to pleasing men. However, he should not be distressed over this, since, although for a short time Leah ceased to give birth, she then offered her husband her handmaid Zelpha, who gave birth to Gad and Asher, which means wealth. When Leah finally ceased from giving birth, God remembered Rachel (Genesis 30:9-23).

8. The allegorical meaning of this is as follows. If the bodily labors of ascesis master the senses and the senses are freed from the passions,

so as no longer to be enslaved thereto, then genuine vision reveals its own glories to the mind. According to the narrative of the Old Testament, the sons of Leah were a help to Jacob; however, he loved Joseph more than all of his other sons. That is, while bodily exertions protect a man from the Enemy, only genuine vision unites him with God.

9. When Jacob saw Joseph, he wished to return to his parents, since he foresaw that the king of his brothers had been born to him. Upon his return, the Patriarch Jacob received the joy of the blessing of God, Who said to him: "Thy name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name" (Genesis 32:28).

10. He was called Jacob because he overcame the enmity of his brother Esau (Genesis 27:36), until he was vouchsafed the blessing of God and his senses, which were subject to the passion of enmity, were saved. When his senses were freed, then he was renamed Israel, which means "a mind that sees God."

11. For when a mind succeeds in beholding the glory of the Godhead, enmity fears it, so that, even if the bearer of enmity, Esau, comes to meet it with feelings of bitterness, Jacob's humility immediately extinguishes the evil of his enemy (Genesis 33:1-4). Jacob then no longer fights him, but after throwing himself before God with humility, gains the help of God, Who fights his adversary for him.

12. Even if the enmity of the Enemy turns into jealousy when he sees with what great glory a man has been honored, the hatred of his enemy will no longer be able to oppress him, for he has God as his helper, Who tells him, as it is written: "Return to the land of thy father, and to thy family, and I will be with thee" (Genesis 31:3).

13. Jacob reached Jerusalem (Salem), which means peace. This signifies that, after a man has passed through war, he then enjoys peace of spirit. In this place of peace, in the land which God promised him, Jacob bought a field and built an altar to God, in order to offer thereon a sacrifice of thanksgiving, because God heard him during his days of affliction. On this altar, he offered a sacrifice from the labors of his servitude when he was in Mesopotamia (Genesis 33:18-20).

14. All of these events and those like them were foreshadowings of

spiritual life and ascesis for Jacob and those like him, who struggled before the advent of Grace, that is, before Christ. For us, who live after Christ, they were written for our admonition (*cf.* I Corinthians 10:11), so that we might walk in the same footsteps as those who have striven to acquire immortality. For it was their faith in immortality that protected them from the darts of the Enemy. Indeed, those blessed men sought refuge under God's protection, beseeching His help and not trusting in their own efforts. Thus, the protection of God proved to be a fortified city for them (Psalm 30:22).

15. For if God sees that the mind is subject to Him with all of its might, and has no other help, save Him alone, He strengthens it, saying: "Fear not, Jacob, and thou Israel, few in number" (Isaiah 41:13-14). And elsewhere: "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. And if thou pass through water, I am with thee; and the rivers shall not overflow thee: and if thou go through fire, thou shalt not be burned; the flame shall not burn thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, that saveth thee" (Isaiah 43:1-3).

16. If, therefore, the mind accepts this confident assurance, armed with boldness against its enemy, it says: "Who is he that fighteth me? let him stand up against me. Who is he that judgeth me? let him draw nigh to me. Behold, the Lord will help me; who will hurt me? Behold, all ye shall wax old as a garment, and a moth shall devour you" (Isaiah 50:8-9).

17. If you are younger (in the monastic life) and have not yet subdued your body, when you hear of the lofty virtues of the Fathers, do not hasten to them, desiring to acquire them with ease; for they will not come to you unless you have first cultivated them in your soul. But if you cultivate them, they will come to you by themselves.

18. There are three virtues by which, if the mind sees that it possesses them, it ascertains that it has attained to immortality: the first is discretion, that is, the capacity to discern whether something is good or bad; the second is foresight, that is, the capacity to foresee things before they happen; and the third is to avoid assenting to any demonic thoughts.

19. There are also three other virtues which at all times provide the mind with abundant light: not to know the wickedness of any man; to

do good to those who do us evil; and to endure calmly whatever befalls us.

20. These three virtues engender three other greater virtues: not seeing the wickedness of another engenders love for our neighbor; doing good to those who do us evil helps us to acquire peace; and enduring calmly whatever befalls us confers meekness on our soul. In these three virtues rests the Spirit of God.

21. There are also four other virtues which purify the soul: silence, observance of the commandments, abstemiousness, and humility.

22. There are four other virtues which the mind needs at all times, and by which it is protected: first, prostrating before God and praying unceasingly; second, throwing ourselves before God in self-abasement; third, not prying into other people's affairs, so as not to condemn anyone; and fourth, remaining deaf towards the passions that speak to us—that is, towards passionate thoughts. We shall be able to apply all of this, provided we strive not to forget God's benefactions to us or our obligations to Him.

23. The soul is darkened by four vices, all directed against one's neighbor: hatred, contempt, grumbling, and envy. The soul is rendered barren by the following four passions: when a monk wanders around from place to place; when he loves distraction; when he yearns for material possessions; and when he is overcome by miserliness.

24. Whoever wishes to become a disciple of Jesus flees from the passions; for unless he succeeds in cutting them off, he cannot become a dwelling-place of God or perceive the sweetness of His Divinity. Our Lord Jesus Himself said: "[I]f therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness" (St. Matthew 6:22-23).

25. Be watchful, then, for unless your mind recovers from evil and becomes healthy, it will be unable to perceive the light of the Godhead. For evil becomes a dark wall for the mind and makes the soul barren, as it is written in the Holy Gospel: "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light" (St. Luke 11:33). By the

word "bushel" you should understand the injustice of this world.****

26. When the mind is in a state contrary to nature, being occupied with base and worldly thoughts, then the light of the Godhead cannot shine within it. But if the mind is set on a tall candlestick, then the light of the Godhead shines on it, and with the aid of this light the mind distinguishes those present in the house, that is, the various thoughts and dispositions of the soul, so that it expels those which it should expel and leaves those with which it should be at peace. For this reason, the Lord said to His Disciples, whose minds had been illumined by the light of the Godhead: "Arise, let us go hence" (St. John 14:31).

27. Whence, then, does He take them and whither does He lead them? It should be understood that He elevates their minds from preoccupation with the things of the present life and gives them rest in His Kingdom. For this reason, in another place, in order to strengthen them, He said: "I am the vine, ye are the branches" (St. John 15:5). "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (St. John 15:4).

28. He says these things to those who have forsaken the world and separated themselves from the passions, since the Holy Spirit is in them. He it is that serves them and cares for them, as Christ also said: "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (St. Matthew 10:20).

29. The Apostle says in this regard: "But God hath revealed [this] unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (I Corinthians 2:10). And again: "But we have the mind of Christ" (I Corinthians 2:16). How, then, can one imagine that he who sins has the mind of Christ? In another passage the Apostle says: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Ephesians 5:30).

30. Do you see that Christ desires that man be like Him in all respects? This is why Scripture says that God "brought" all of the animals "to Adam, to see what he would call them" (Genesis 2:19) and to see whether any of them resembled him. Of all the animals, not one was found to resemble him, because they were not of the same nature as Adam. Then God took "one of his ribs" and created a woman, whom

Adam called thus because God had taken her "out of her husband" (Genesis 2:23).

31. Therefore, just as Eve, being taken from Adam, was like him in all respects, so also those who have forsaken the things of this world and followed Christ's holy Will have been vouchsafed, in terms of their souls, to become His brides and remain united with Him, since they are of His Essence, through the regeneration of the Spirit, and belong to His holy Body, as the Apostle says: for we are all "one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Romans 12:5).

32. Since we have introduced into our souls something of the irrationality of the animals, such as the greed of the wild beasts, the instability of the birds, or the venom of the reptiles, we cannot be considered brides of Christ or belong to His Body, since our deeds and attitudes are not consonant with His life. Therefore, the soul that has been deemed worthy to become a bride of Christ is healthy and resembles its Bridegroom, has been freed from all that is unnatural, and is recognized as a bride of Christ by its virtuous conduct. For this reason, the Apostle Paul says: "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (II Corinthians 13:5).

33. Do you see that, insofar as a man has not acquired the conduct of our Lord Jesus Christ (that is, does not live as our Lord did), he is still reprobate and is not a virgin in Christ's eyes? For as we learn from the parable on this subject, all of the ten virgins had prepared their lamps, but those who had not brought oil with them, that is, who had not acquired the practical virtues, remained outside the door of the bridal chamber (St. Matthew 25:1-13).

34. Let us, therefore, strive to acquire the practical virtues, for if we do, the Holy Spirit will dwell in us, according to the Lord's promise: "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth" (St. John 14:15-17).

35. Let us do all in our power, shedding tears and struggling little by little, until we have put off the conduct of the old man, to safeguard ourselves from everything that leads us to perdition, until God's love enters us, removes from us the image of the earthly man, and sets up His holy

image in our hearts, as the Apostle says: "[A]s we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (I Corinthians 15:49).

36. Since the Apostle knew that there has been no man without sin, from the time that Adam's transgression occurred, and, on the other hand, that repentance can bring man to a new state of sinlessness, on this account he said that we must forsake the works of the first Adam, who disobeyed the commandment, and put into practice the conduct recommended by our Lord Jesus Christ, which conduct consists in the fulfillment of His holy commandments.

37. The Lord took pity on man and bore the burden of man's slavery, until He had brought him into the mystical Paradise, bestowing upon him all of His holy virtues and granting him to eat of the Tree of Life, which is purity of body and soul.

38. And He said to those who followed Him in every way, whom He made His brothers and friends (St. John 15:14), pouring His Spirit upon them: "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (St. John 20:17). Concerning them, He said to His Father: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us" (St. John 17:20-21). A little later on He adds: "Thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me" (St. John 17:23-24).

39. These are the words of those who love Jesus and who hope in Him, whose souls have become brides adorned with every kind of virtue, having within themselves a holy mirror, in which they look carefully at themselves, lest they find any stain in the animate image of God and not be pleasing to their Bridegroom.

40. In this mirror they unceasingly behold the reflection of the glory of the Bridegroom, as the Apostle Paul says: "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Corinthians 3:18). And again, he says: "For now we see through a glass,

darkly; but then face to face" (I Corinthians 13:12).

41. The same Abba Isaiah said:
"When a man takes blame upon oneself and relinquishes his own will in the interest of his neighbor for the sake of God—lest the Enemy come into their midst and provoke a quarrel between them—he proves to be a doer of God's commandments; for he who has an alert mind and consciously places himself beneath the Lord's feet is always eager to cut off his own will, lest he be separated from his beloved Lord.

42. "On the contrary, he who says, 'I do not care whether I speak or hear something,' is like a blind man who, whether he is brought inside or taken outside, cannot discern day from darkness, for he does not see the light.

43. "This point can be understood by analogy with the visible sun: When a small cloud scuds beneath it, it occludes the sun's rays and diminishes its warmth. These matters are not evident to everyone, but only to those who have knowledge. Negligence and blaming one's neighbor disturb the intellect and do not allow it to behold the light of God."

**C. From Abba Mark**

1. You should know that through Baptism we receive complete remission of sins, according to the gift of Christ, and that when we are baptized we are given the Grace of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of fulfilling all of the commandments. Therefore, all who receive this Grace mystically and do not carry out the commandments to perfection fall under the sway—to the extent that they fail to observe them—of sin.

2. Therefore, should you ask me, "If we have been set free through Baptism, why do we not enjoy the air of freedom, as do those who struggle?" my response is this: "It is because we are darkened by the pleasures in which we willfully indulge and because we neglect to observe the very commandments which strugglers succeed in fulfilling. For indeed, as I have said, man is freed in accordance with the gift of Christ; however, according to one's will, which is not obliterated, he cleaves to that which he loves—even though he has been baptized—given that his free will is inviolable."

3. In proportion, therefore, to the intensity of our faith in God and our readiness to perform His commandments, the Holy Spirit brings forth His own fruits in us. The fruits of the Spirit, according to the Holy Apostle Paul, are: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22-23).

4. Therefore, O man, you who have been baptized in Christ, all that is required of you is to carry out the spiritual work of which you have been made able and to prepare yourself for the manifestation of Him Who dwells in you; and thus the Lord will appear to you spiritually, according to His promise (St. John 14:21), as He Himself knows: "Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (II Corinthians 3:17). Then you will understand the verse: "[T]he kingdom of God is within you" (St. Luke 17:21).

5. If any believer has lived rightly by carrying out the commandments and has acquired some spiritual power in proportion to the efforts he has put forth, let him believe that he has previously received the capacity for such spiritual activity, insofar as, through Baptism, he has received the Grace of the Holy Spirit, the cause of all good things. What I mean is that this Grace is the cause not only of hidden and spiritual powers, but also of manifest virtues.

6. And let none of the virtuous suppose that he has accomplished even the slightest good through his own power; for the "good man," says the Word, not by his own power, but "out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good" (St. Luke 6:45), meaning by "treasure" the Holy Spirit, Who is hidden in the hearts of believers.

7. For "the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field" (St. Matthew 13:44). He who correctly understands that he has Christ concealed within himself from the time of his Baptism, according to the Apostle (*cf.* II Corinthians 13:5), and rejects all the things of this world, abides with Christ in his heart, guarding it with the utmost care and seeking his departure from the present life, as the Proverb of the wise Solomon says (Proverbs 4:23).

8. Two other sayings of our Lord, "[W]ithout me ye can do nothing"

(St. John 15:5) and "Ye have not chosen me, ...but I have chosen you out of the world" (St. John 15:16, 19), also have the same meaning, namely, that Christ is the treasure of the heart.

9. It is evident, therefore, that the Grace of the Holy Spirit that we have been given is perfect, so that we might be able to fulfill all of the commandments. This Grace is not increased by virtue of our own efforts; rather, it augments our growth in Christ, strengthening unto death those who labor worthily in the struggle for virtue, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

10. Thus, in conclusion, we have received perfect Grace, as we have said; but this Grace is disclosed to us in different ways, according to the different degrees of effort that we expend. For, just as the sun, being perfect, sheds its warmth on all creatures perfectly, generally, and equally, and yet each of us receives the light of the sun in proportion to the purity of his eyes, so also is it with the Holy Spirit.

11. That is to say, the Holy Spirit has made those who believe in Him capable, through Baptism, of receiving all of His benefactions and gifts. However, He does not activate His gifts equally in all, but in each according to his worth, in keeping with the degree to which he fulfills the commandments, so that by their good works they might attest to and make manifest the measure of their faith in Christ. For this reason, Scripture says, "...God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6) and, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16).

### Question

12. Then, when one has been baptized, Whom does he mystically receive in Baptism: Christ or the Holy Spirit? For at times you have said that Christ dwells in the soul of one who has been baptized and at times the Holy Spirit.

### Answer

13. We receive the Holy Spirit through Baptism, since He is called

both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ, and for this reason it is through the Holy Spirit that we receive both the Father and the Son.

**Question**

14. So, is the Holy Spirit the Trinity Itself?

**Answer**

15. We do not say that the Spirit, considered as one Person, is Himself the Trinity; but since He is not separate from the Father and the Son (according to His Essence), for this reason we confess that the Trinity is in Him according to His Divinity.

16. For just as the Son and the Spirit are in the Father, and the Father and the Spirit are in the Son, so also are the Father and the Son in the Spirit—not by any confusion of the three Hypostases, but by the union of one and the same Will and Godhead. Thus, whether we call God the Father, or the Son, or the Spirit in particular, we name the Holy Trinity through one single name, according to the teaching that we have previously expounded.

17. The Lord is hidden in His commandments and is found by those who seek Him, to the extent that they fulfill the commandments. What a perceptible house is to the common atmospheric air, such is the rational mind to Divine Grace. To the extent that you remove material items from a house, air will enter the house automatically; and to the extent that you place material items in a house, air will withdraw from the house. Matter, in the case of a house, consists of furnishings and food. In the case of the mind, it consists of vainglory and pleasure. A spacious heart evinces hope in God; a constricted heart evinces hope in bodily strength.

18. The Grace of the Holy Spirit is single and immutable, but it acts upon each person individually, as He wills (*cf.* I Corinthians 12:11). Just as rain that is shed on the earth endows plants with the qualities inherent to each—sweetness for the sweet and astringency for the astringent—so also Grace, when it descends into the hearts of the faithful, without itself undergoing any change, bestows on each person the energies appropriate to his particular virtue: it becomes sustenance for one

who endures hunger for the sake of Christ, the sweetest drink for him who is thirsty, clothing for him who is cold, rest for one who is weary, hope of heart for him who prays, and consolation for him who mourns.

19. When you hear Holy Scripture saying of the Holy Spirit that He sat [settled—*Trans.*] upon each of the Apostles (Acts 2:3), or that He came upon the Prophet (I Kings 11:6; 16:13), or that He works (I Corinthians 12:11), or that He is grieved (Ephesians 4:30), or that He is quenched (I Thessalonians 5:19), or that He is provoked (Isaiah 63:10), or again, that some "have the firstfruits of the Spirit" (Romans 8:23), while others are "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4), do not imagine that the Holy Spirit is subject to any change, division, or alteration, but believe that, just as we have said, He is immutable, unchanging, and omnipotent.

20. Therefore, as befits God, when the Holy Spirit acts, He both provides for each person that which is necessary for him and remains what He is in Essence (and Energy). For like the sun (which sheds its rays on the natural world without in any way diminishing its own heat or light), He is poured out perfectly on those who are baptized. Each of us, insofar as he hates the passions that darken his soul and expels them, is correspondingly illumined by the Holy Spirit, whereas, insofar as one cherishes them and toys with them, he is darkened.

21. He who hates the passions eradicates from his soul the causes that give rise to them, whereas he who is addicted to their causes is beset by the passions even against his will.

22. We acquire knowledge of things to the extent that we fulfill the commandments. We acquire knowledge of the truth according to the measure of our hope in God. Therefore, if you wish "to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I St. Timothy 2:4), endeavor at all times to transcend the things of the senses and cleave to God through hope alone.

23. For in this way, whenever you deviate against your will, you will find "principalities" and "powers" (Ephesians 6:12) warring against you through provocative suggestions. But if you overcome these assaults through prayer and maintain good hope in God, you will know by experience the Grace of God, which delivers you from the wrath to come.

For it is necessary first to have the Grace of the Holy Spirit acting in your heart and thus, in proportion to the activity of Grace, to enter the Kingdom of Heaven in the age to come.

**D. From St. Diadochos**

1. The Holy Spirit of God, in His love for mankind, teaches us that the natural sense of the soul is single. For whereas the five familiar senses differ, in that they serve the body's various needs, this single natural sense, on account of the lapse towards evil that befell our mind as a result of Adam's disobedience, is divided in conformity with the movements of the soul.

2. For this reason, one aspect of the aforementioned natural sense is led astray by the passionate inclination of the soul; and so it is that we experience hedonistic feelings towards the good things of this transitory life. However, another aspect of this natural sense oftentimes takes delight in the rational and noetic inclination of the soul, whenever our mind yearns to pursue heavenly beauty, as happens when we cultivate temperance.

3. If, therefore, we become accustomed to disdaining the good things of this passing world, we shall then be able to unite the soul's appetite for earthly things with its rational disposition, which result is effected in us by the communion of the Holy Spirit. For, unless the Divinity of the Holy Spirit illumines the treasury of our heart through its Energy, we shall never be able to taste the good with the sense of the soul undivided, that is, not bifurcated between a desire for heavenly things and a desire for earthly things.

4. The sense of the mind consists in the accurate discrimination, as though through taste, between states that differ from each other in moral quality. Just as we distinguish through the bodily sense of taste—provided we are healthy—between good and bad food, and develop an appetite for what is good, so also our mind, when it is sound and begins to function in complete detachment from material concerns, is able to experience Divine consolation and is never led astray by sinful pleasure.

5. For just as the body, when it tastes delectable earthly foods, has unerring experience of the sensations produced by such foods, so, as

well, does it happen with the mind.

6. When the mind exults in rising above the mind of the flesh (Romans 8:7), it is able to taste the consolation of the Holy Spirit without risk of delusion—for as Scripture says, "O taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 33:9). Hence, through the love at work within him, one is able to preserve the memory of this savor unforgotten, by unceasingly approving things that are excellent, as the Holy Apostle Paul says: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent" (Philippians 1:9-10).

7. The mind can be purified only by the Holy Spirit. For unless the Mighty One enters the mind and despoils the thief (the Devil), in no way can the booty that the thief has stolen be recovered. We must, therefore, by every means, and above all through peace of soul, ensure that the Holy Spirit dwells within us, so that we might have the lamp of spiritual knowledge ever lit within us.

8. As long as this light shines unceasingly in the treasury of our soul, not only do the bitter and dark assaults of the demons become evident to the mind, but they are also exceedingly weakened, being exposed by that holy and glorious light.

9. For this reason, the Apostle Paul says: "Quench not the Spirit" (I Thessalonians 5:19). By this he means: do not, by thinking or doing evil, grieve the goodness of the Holy Spirit, lest you be deprived of His protecting radiance. For the Holy Spirit, being eternal and life-giving, cannot be quenched; but the grief of the Holy Spirit—that is, His aversion to the sinner—leaves the mind bereft of illuminating knowledge and thus dark and gloomy.

10. Just as a rough sea naturally subsides when oil is poured on it, the surge being subdued by the density of the oil, so also our soul, when anointed by the goodness of the Holy Spirit, enjoys sweet tranquility. It joyfully accepts vanquishment by the good and ineffable sweetness of the Holy Spirit that overshadows it. The Prophet-King David expresses the feeling of joy that arises from such submission when he says: "But be thou subject unto God, my soul" (Psalm 61:6).

11. For this reason, then, no matter how many provocations the demons may unleash against the soul, it remains free from anger and full of joy. One enters into this state, or abides therein, only if he unceasingly sweetens his soul with the fear of God. For on those who struggle against sin, the fear of our Lord Jesus Christ confers a kind of purification. As the Prophet David says, "The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring for ever and ever" (Psalm 18:10).

12. We should not doubt that when the mind begins to be acted upon frequently by the Divine Light, it becomes so wholly transparent that it vividly sees its own light; for I say that this happens when the power of the soul gains dominion over the passions. However, the Divine Paul clearly teaches us that every form which appears to the mind, whether as light or as fire, may come from the malicious craftiness of the Enemy, when he says that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (II Corinthians 11:14).

13. Therefore, we should not pursue the ascetical life on the basis of this hope (of seeing visions), lest Satan find the soul ripe for delusion. Our sole aim should be to reach the point of loving God with complete consciousness and with full assurance of heart, that is, "with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (St. Matthew 22:37; St. Mark 12:30; St. Luke 10:27). He who is led by Divine Grace to such wholehearted love for God has already departed from the world, even though he is still physically present in it.

14. The natural love of the soul is one thing, and the love inspired in it by the Holy Spirit is another. The former is aroused by our own will, to the extent that we desire, and when we so desire, and for this reason it is easily exploited by the evil spirits whenever we fail to maintain firm control over our intentions.

15. The latter so inflames the soul with love for God that all of the faculties of the soul cleave ineffably to the sweetness of yearning for God with an unboundedly single-minded attitude. For in this case the mind, becoming, as it were, gravid with spiritual energy, pours forth a fountain of love and joy.

16. Just as the everyday air that surrounds us remains, on the one hand, pure when the north wind blows over the created world, since

this wind is subtle in nature and produces clear weather, and, on the other hand, when the south wind blows, becomes completely hazy, since the nature of this wind is to generate mist, bringing an admixture of clouds from regions all over the inhabited earth (by reason of a certain affinity for clouds), so also is the soul: When it comes under the inspiration of the true and Holy Spirit, it finds itself entirely outside the mist generated by the demons; when, however, the spirit of delusion vehemently breathes upon it, it becomes completely covered by the clouds of sin.

17. Therefore, we must always direct our purpose, with all of our might, towards the vivifying and purifying breeze of the Holy Spirit, that is, to the wind which the Prophet Ezekiel, illumined by the light of knowledge, saw coming from the North (Ezekiel 1:4), in order that the contemplative faculty of the soul might remain always clear and that we might thus devote ourselves unerringly to the vision of things Divine, beholding the works of light in an atmosphere of light. For this is the light of true knowledge.

**E. From Abba Isaac**

1. The soul that loves God finds rest in God and in Him alone. First detach yourself from every bond with the external world, and then you will be able to bind your heart to God. For freeing oneself from material things precedes binding oneself to God.

2. An infant is given bread to eat after it has been weaned; and a man who desires to advance in Divine things must first estrange himself from all of the things of this world, like an infant from its mother's breasts.

3. Bodily ascesis (bodily hardships and fasting) precedes spiritual ascesis (prayer of the heart and contemplation), just as Adam's body was first fashioned from the earth and his soul was then breathed into him. He who is not successful in bodily ascesis cannot be fruitful in spiritual ascesis, for the latter is engendered by the former, just as an ear of corn springs from a bare grain of wheat.

4. He who is not successful in spiritual ascesis is deprived of spiritual gifts. What man who loves babble can acquire a pure intellect? Or

what man who is licentious and dissolute in his bodily members can ever be humble in heart and calm?

5. Whenever the mind is allured by the senses, then together with them it eats the provender of beasts (the passions); but whenever the senses are attracted by the mind, then they partake, together with the mind, of the food of Angels (the gifts of the Spirit).

**Question**

6. What is the cause of visions and revelations? And how does it happen that some people are vouchsafed visions and revelations (even though they may not have toiled greatly in ascetical and spiritual struggles), whereas others have not obtained any such spiritual gifts, in spite of having undertaken greater toil and mortification than the former?

**Answer**

7. The causes of these are many and various. For the most part, however, visions and revelations are bestowed on men in three ways, owing to God's mercy. The Grace of the Holy Spirit is revealed either to perfect and holy people, in whom it is active on account of their purity of heart; or to simpler and surpassingly guileless people, because they are characterized by innocence and unpretentiousness and are thus in no danger of becoming puffed up with pride; or to those who possess ardent zeal for God and have completely renounced the world—who have gone forth naked, in order to encounter God, and have withdrawn far from men.

8. To these the Grace of the Holy Spirit is revealed lest, by reason of their solitude, they fall into faintheartedness, being compassed about every day by fear of death from hunger or illness or some other circumstance. This fear is often so intense that they come close to despair.

9. God often sends consolations, in the form of visions and revelations, to such solitaries, because they have no consolation from human beings. For as long as a man has consolation from his fellow men or from visible things, God does not provide him with such preternatural consolation, unless He so deigns, by economy, for the common good. One of the ascetic Fathers can attest to this, for when he besought God

to grant him such a vision or revelation, he was told by God: "Association with men and the consolation that comes from them is sufficient for you."

10. The case of another pious and virtuous man is instructive.***** He was formerly an anchorite and habitually enjoyed the consolation of God through visions and revelations, as long as he was staying alone in the desert. Later this anchorite became a Bishop and had to live in close proximity to the world. As was his wont, he asked God to console him. But he did not find the consolation that he expected.

11. In great distress, he implored God to reveal to him the reason why he no longer enjoyed the consolation to which he had become accustomed, saying: "Has Thy Grace perhaps departed from me, O Lord, because I have become a Bishop?" To his entreaty God replied: "No, it has not; but now you have consolation from men, who look after you, and this is sufficient for you. Before, you were alone in the desert and had no visible consolation, and so you received consolation directly from Me."

12. A vision is not the same as a revelation; there is a difference between the two. Every vision can also be called a revelation, since through it knowledge hidden from men is disclosed. However, a revelation does not always have the character of a vision, for revelation is received, for the most part, by those who have attained to purity of heart and has reference to things known and experienced by the mind.

13. Visions, on the other hand, occur for the most part by way of images and types, as was the case with the Fathers of old, whether the one who beheld them was awake or fast asleep. For this reason, it often happens that when one is having a vision, he does not know whether he is awake or asleep.

14. Sometimes visions are conveyed precisely and clearly, face to face; at other times more obscurely, through types and apparitions. Such visions occur to men who have not yet attained to perfection, living in desert regions and far removed from human beings, where a man has need of consoling visions, since, in view of the remoteness of the location, he cannot find help or consolation from any other source.

**F. From St. Maximos**

1. Just as the sun, when it rises and illumines the world, manifests both itself and the things illumined by it, so also the Sun of Righteousness, when He rises in a pure mind, reveals both Himself and the Divine principles of the things that have been, and will be, brought into existence by Him.

2. We cannot know God from His Essence, but only from His majestic creation and His Providence for existing things; for through these we perceive, as through a mirror, the infinite goodness, wisdom, and power of God.

3. Christ, Who promised you eternal good things and "Who hath... given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (II Corinthians 1:22), has enjoined you to attend with diligence to your manner of life, so that your inner man might be freed from the passions and might begin, here and now, to enjoy heavenly good things, being vouchsafed (through purity of soul) Divine and lofty spiritual visions.

4. Be exceedingly diligent to cultivate love and abstinence, so that you might keep the passible part of your soul free from disturbance and might thus preserve the brightness of your soul ever undimmed.

5. Bridle the incensive faculty of the soul through love, wither the appetitive faculty through abstinence, and give wings to the rational faculty through prayer; and then the light of your mind will never be darkened. Love and abstinence free the soul from the passions; spiritual reading and contemplation deliver the mind from ignorance; and finally, continuous prayer brings it into the presence of God.

6. God is, as Holy Scripture says, the "Sun of Righteousness" (Malachi 4:2), Who sheds the bright rays of His goodness upon all alike; but the soul that receives these rays becomes, according to its free will and choice, either wax, when it loves God, or clay, when it loves matter.

7. Therefore, just as clay is dried by the sun's rays, whereas wax is naturally softened thereby, so it is with every soul that loves matter and the world; when such a soul, which resembles clay by virtue of its free will and choice, is admonished by God, it becomes hardened and drives

itself, like Pharaoh (*cf.* Exodus 7:13; 14:28), to destruction.

8. Contrariwise, the soul that loves God is softened like wax and, receiving the impressions and characters of holy things, becomes "an habitation of God through the Spirit" [Ephesians 2:22], adding to its natural beauty, which is "according to the image," the goodness that is achieved, by its free choice, "according to the likeness (of God)" (Genesis 1:26).

9. It is not the man that honors God only by words who glorifies God in himself, but he who, for God's sake, endures sufferings and hardships in the quest for virtue; such a man is glorified in return by God with the glory that is in God, receiving, by participation, the Grace of dispassion as a "reward" for virtue, so to speak.

10. For everyone who glorifies God in himself through the sufferings that he endures in ascetical practice performed for the sake of virtue is himself glorified in God through the passionless illumination that he receives while contemplating Divine realities.

11. This is what the Lord said when He was going to His Passion: "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him" (St. John 13:31-32). From this, it is evident that sufferings endured for the sake of virtue are followed by the bestowal of Divine charisms.

12. The phrase, "[T]he kingdom of heaven is at hand" does not, in my opinion, imply any temporal proximity; for "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there!" (St. Luke 17:20-21). Rather, this phrase indicates what relationship those worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven have towards it, in terms of their inward disposition, as we can understand from the remainder of this passage: "[F]or, behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (St. Luke 17:21).

13. The Kingdom of God the Father exists potentially in all believers, but in actuality it is found only in those who by choice and disposition have renounced the natural life of soul and body, who have acquired the life of the Spirit alone, and who can say, with the Apostle Paul:

"[I]t is no longer I who live, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20).

* The suitable response of the mind to the attack of an evil thought is called the technique of rebutting thoughts.

** The tenth hour corresponds, during an equinoctial period, to our four o'clock p.m.

*** See Hypothesis VIII, Section J, subsection 14, Book IV.

**** A bushel is a unit of dry measurement of grain.

***** See Hypothesis XV, Section A, subsection 1, Book III.

## Hypothesis XXV

*In how many ways Divine withdrawal and abandonment occur, and what we should do in such instances, so that Divine Grace might again come upon us.*

### A. From St. Diadochos

1. The *instructive withdrawal* of God [the first kind of Divine withdrawal—*Trans.*] in no wise deprives the soul of the illumination of Divine light; rather, Grace only hides its presence for a time from the mind of one benefiting from such instructive withdrawal, so as to move a soul troubled by the bitterness arising from the demons to seek, with fervor and with great humility, the aid of God, coming to understand, little by little, the evil of the demonic Enemy.

2. In this same way, a mother, when her baby is cantankerous while nursing, will remove it for a little from her embrace, so as to leave it in fear of some nearby menacing person or some wild animal, and then shortly after fetch it—crying and frightened—to her breast again.

3. However, when God *withdraws by turning away* from those who do not wish to dwell near to Him [the second kind of Divine withdrawal—*Trans.*], it is as if He surrenders their souls captive to the demons. But we are not children abandoned to captivity. God forbid! On the contrary, we believe that we are true children of the Grace of God, suckled by that Grace and instructed from a young age by stern admonitions, such that, in the goodness of Divine Grace, we might become perfect men "unto the measure of the stature and the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

4. Instructive withdrawal, on the one hand, occasions great sadness of soul, abasement, and dejection (commensurate with one's stamina to endure it), in order to humble the soul in its vanity and to expunge the fear which intimidates it; such withdrawal also, on the other hand, immediately brings fear of God to the heart, along with tears of confession, encouraging it, as well, in the desire for beneficial silence.

5. Contrarily, that withdrawal which comes from a turning-away by God fills the soul with despair, disbelief, anger, and pride. We, then, who know what happens to the soul in both of these kinds of withdrawal, must undertake to approach God according to the means suitable to each.

6. In the circumstance of instructive withdrawal, we should thank God and confess to Him, since with His paternal, albeit stern, admonitions, He chastises the culpable compulsions of our soul, which, were they to go unpunished, would develop into condemnable and sinful acts. Through His very energy, God, as a good and tender-loving Father, helps us to distinguish the difference between virtue and evil.

7. In the circumstance of withdrawal entailing a turning-away by God, we must continually and ceaselessly confess our sins, so that, by the increase in our works of repentance, we might appease God, so that He will, as before, come to oversee our hearts.

8. We must know, moreover, that in the circumstance of instructive withdrawal, when the soul happens to come into violent conflict with Satan, and this develops into a fierce fight, Divine Grace limits its sensible presence in a way logically inexplicable, yet without ceasing its help to the soul. This is done so that it might appear to its enemies that the victory of the soul over them was its exclusive feat.

9. The presence of Divine Grace in our souls, at the beginning of our spiritual struggles, can be sufficiently sensed, since Grace illuminates the soul with its own light; yet, as our spiritual struggles proceed, Divine Grace acts on the pious soul with mysterious, inexpressible power, in order to place us, filled with joy and gladness, on the track towards (spiritual) visions and Divine revelations. This power of Divine Grace has the effect of directing our souls from ignorance to the knowledge of the world of supernatural beauty. In the midst of our spiritual struggles at their height, then, Divine Grace comes secretly to our defense, so that we should not fall to vainglory by virtue of our attainment of the aforementioned knowledge.

10. We should, therefore, show sorrow—always within limits—as though we have been abandoned, that we might be even more greatly humbled and thus submit ourselves to the glory of the Lord. With the

opportunity of such an alteration of the soul, we should rejoice, for our good hope gives us wings. Both the joy and the sadness that we experience should be of equal measure and restrained, for just as unlimited grief leads to despair, so hyperbolic joy eventually leads the soul to pride.

11. And to those who are yet but children in their progress in the spiritual life, I would say this: the midpoint and the border between enlightenment and abandonment are testing and patience, just as hope is the border and midpoint between sadness and joy. Behold, in this regard, what the Prophet-King David says: "I waited patiently for the Lord, and He was attentive unto me" (Psalm 39:1). And at another point, "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given gladness to my soul" (Psalm 93:19).

**B. From St. Maximos**

1. There are four general instances of the abandonment of man by God. First, there is the abandonment by Providence, for their salvation, of those who simply *think* that they have been abandoned. Such a thing happened to the Lord (St. Matthew 27:46; St. Mark 15:34). Second is abandonment for the sake of *being tested*, as was the case with Job (Job 1:12, 2:6) and with Joseph (Genesis 37:18-28), in order to make manifest the former as a pillar of courage and the latter as a pillar of prudence. Third, there is the abandonment of *fatherly instruction*, such that a man, humbled by what he thinks to be abandonment, might preserve the rich gift of Grace, as was the case with the Apostle Paul (II Corinthians 12:7). Fourth, there is abandonment on account of a *turning-away* (by God), such that men are brought to punishment for the sake of turning them to repentance (Jeremiah 25:8-13; II Chronicles 36:6-21; St. Luke 19:41-44), as was the case with the Jews.

2. All of these ways of abandonment aim at the salvation of man and are redolent with the goodness and love of God for mankind.

## Hypothesis XXVI

*Spiritual contemplation excites the spiritual mind and causes it to forget all earthly things. Divine Grace becomes all things to those perfected: nourishment, drink, and raiment. For this reason, many of the Saints, strengthened by Divine Grace, either gave no heed whatever to these material resources or accounted them of least worth, thus overcoming the boundaries of nature.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. It is said of Abba John the Short that he was once plaiting enough strands* of palm leaves for two baskets. But he was so taken up by lofty spiritual contemplation, that he made only a single basket, instead of two; and only when he saw that the size of the basket that he had constructed was so big that it was approaching the walls (of his cell) did he understand what he had done.

2. Yet another time, a brother went to the cell of Abba John, in order to collect his baskets. When he knocked on the door, the Elder came out and asked: "What do you want, my brother?"

"Your baskets, my Abba," the brother answered.

So, Abba John went into his cell to get his baskets. Overtaken, however, by Divine ecstasy, he forgot what he was doing. Thus, instead of going out with the baskets, he sat down and began stitching (strands together).

3. Since he was taking so much time, the brother once again knocked. As soon as the Abba came out of his cell, the brother said to him: "Bring me, Abba, the baskets!"

However, having gone back in, once again the Abba forgot what he was doing and began his stitching.

4. After this last delay, the brother knocked once more, waiting for some time for the Abba finally to appear.

"What do you want?" the Abba said, as though seeing the brother

for the first time.

"The baskets, my Abba," the visitor replied.

Thereupon, the Abba took him by the hand and, having taken him into his cell, said: "If you want baskets, take them and go. I am busy." (He said this because his spiritual mind was taken up with mystical contemplation.)

5. A similar event happened with Abba John on another occasion. A camel herder, after being invited by the Saint, went to his cell in order to collect the Saint's supplies for making baskets and to transport them to another place. Abba John went into his cell to bring out all of the strands of palm leaves that he had prepared. So much, however, had his mind been taken up by God, that he forgot what he was doing.

6. The camel herder once more prevailed on the Abba, pounding on the door of his cell. The Abba exited and was told again the reason that the camel herder was there. But as soon as he went back in, in order to carry out his task, the Abba immediately forgot what he was doing.

7. The camel herder was forced to knock a third time! And, indeed, the Abba exited his cell and learned anew what the man wanted. And now, in order not to forget again, he said to himself, as he entered his cell, "Strands..., camel; strands..., camel."

8. Abba Abraham relates the following about a certain Father, who was overcome by spiritual contemplation. A book scribe, he was asked by a brother to produce a book. This Elder, however, had so much concentrated his mind on lofty contemplation, that he did not correctly compose the verses for the book and did not indicate the verse notations.**

9. As soon as the brother who had ordered the book received it—and seeing that the transcription was not correctly ordered by verse and that there were no verse notations, in order to separate each verse—he wanted to insert at least the verse notations; however, even this was not easy to do, since he realized that there were so many omissions.

So, he appealed to the Elder who had transcribed the book, saying to him: "Elder, the verses in the book are not correct, and there are not even any verse notations; moreover, I have noted a number of omissions."

The Elder thus said to him: "Go for now and use what I have written; then come back, and I will add the deleted items."

10. Abba Isaac was once sitting next to Abba Poimen and heard the crowing of a rooster. Thereupon, Abba Isaac said to Abba Poimen, "Do you have a rooster here, Abba?"

"Why, Isaac," Abba Poimen responded, "do you force me to break my silence? You and those like you hear the crowing of the cock; but he who has his mind constantly turned towards God does not heed such a thing."

11. Many times the disciples of Abba Sisoes would say to him, when the dinner hour came:

"Rise up, Abba, that we might eat."

"Did we not eat just a while ago?" the Abba would say to them.

"No, Father," the monks would say.

And the Elder would reply, "If we have not eaten, then bring something to eat."

***Commentary by our Father, Paul Evergetinos***

a. So saturated by Divine Grace was this Elder that he was not only liberated from feelings of hunger and thirst, but was not at all bothered if he ate no material food. This occurred because he was nourished from God by the steady and inexhaustible food of the Holy Spirit, finding himself always satiated; for this reason, he did not feel the need for material food.

b. This supernatural phenomenon occurred in many of the Saints, who received the gift from God of not eating even a bit of food, or partaking of food only rarely and for short periods of time. And thus the Lord, being by nature the Originator of our Salvation and of the gifts of God, set forth for us, through His example, this supernatural phenomenon, in keeping with the measure of our human weakness. See what is written in the Holy Gospel in this regard: "And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered" (St. Matthew 4:2).

c. The central idea is this: The Lord, by His example, showed us that He did not hunger for a period of forty days and nights, since He was

filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. However, thereafter, in order to give the Tempter an opportunity to beset Him, and in order to defeat the Tempter, Grace retreated for a moment; and, as a Man, the Lord became hungry. For the incident of His fasting for many days was a superhuman feat, since human nature does not have, of its own accord, the ability to go without the sustenance of food, let alone (save for rare exceptions) to do so for forty consecutive days.

d. That this is, in fact, true is clearly proved by the words with which the Lord rebuked the criminality of the Devil. Indeed, let us examine the matter more closely: the Devil, mocking the Lord, said to Him: "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread" (St. Matthew 4:3). With this scornful phrase, he dared to try to incite the Lord, as a Man, to blasphemy, as though to say to Him that the Father in Heaven, Who proclaimed that He was His Son, when the Lord was baptized by John, failed to provide Him indispensable nourishment, but left Him, instead, deprived for forty days and, right up to that moment, hungry.

e. Now, the Enemy of Truth spoke thusly, since he did not know of the essential relationship of Christ with the Heavenly Father. For this reason, too, he tested Him with his proposition: "Command that these stones be made bread" (St. Matthew 4:3), exhorting the Lord, on the one hand, to contempt and spiritual apathy and, on the other hand, to blaspheme against the Heavenly Father. Thus, the Lord crushed the cunning of the Devil; rightly censuring his ignorance, He replied: "It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (St. Matthew 4:4, Deuteronomy 8:3).

f. By these words, the Lord first proved, with one sentence, that He, as one nourished by the Divine word, was Himself above need; and second, He defended the Heavenly Father as truly just, philanthropic, and true. Now, it was this same heavenly food—upon which Jesus was nourished for forty days in the desert—of which the Elder continually partook, never in any manner feeling, by way of the power of the Holy Spirit within Him, the deprivation of material and ephemeral food.

12. Together with the brothers, St. Makarios the patrician [see translator's note in Hypothesis XVII, Section B (second paragraph), Book II—*Trans.*] went to cut some palm leaves for his handiwork. On the first day of work, the brothers said to him: "Come, Father, and eat with us."

Abba Makarios went with them and they ate together. The next day, the brothers also asked him to eat with them. But he said to them: "You eat, my children, for you have need of food, being inconvenienced by the demands of the flesh. I do not care to eat just now; that is, I desire no material food."

13. Once an Elder visited another Elder. At the eighth hour, the host who had received the visitor said to his disciple: "Cook a few lentils for us and moisten some dried bread."

The disciple, of course, did as he was requested. The two Elders, however, remained caught up in their discussion of spiritual matters from the eighth hour of that day until the eighth hour of the next, without realizing that a twenty-four hour period of time had passed. Not at all, during this time, had they felt the need for food.

14. So, the Elder once again said to his disciple, "My child, cook us a few lentils."

The discipline replied, "Abba, they have been ready since yesterday."

Only then did the Elders eat.

15. Another Elder visited a certain Father. The Father, for the sake of his visitor, cooked a few lentils. As evening fell, he said to his visitor: "Let us recite a short service and read some Psalms."

Thereupon, one recited the entire Psalter and the other two books of the great Prophets. However, without their noticing it, the sun rose, and the visitor bade farewell to his host, without the two remembering to eat.

16. The disciple of a great Elder related the following about his Elder:

"Once, at the ninth hour, we were told to eat. Indeed, the table was set and we began the appointed prayers before the meal. Having chanted two Psalms, the Elder fell into Divine ecstasy and began to speak words inspired by his ecstatic state. He remained in this state until the ninth hour of the next day, and only then ceased his discourse. As he explained to us, his spiritual mind was directed upward and he beheld things beyond the rational—that is, Divine mysteries."

17. Theodore, who became the Bishop of Rhosos*** relates the following:

"Once," he said, "an Elder who was an acquaintance of mine came

to see me. We met at the Lavra of the Towers,**** near the Jordan, where I was then staying. He said to me, 'Do me the kindness, Brother Theodore, of going with me to Mount Sinai, for I have made a vow to go there on pilgrimage.'

"I, out of love and respect for the Elder, could not refuse, and thus accepted his proposal.

18. "As soon as we had crossed the Jordan, the Elder once again said to me: 'Brother Theodore, let us set a condition: that neither of us will eat, until we have reached Mount Sinai.'

"'Truthfully, Father,' I answered him, 'I cannot fulfill such a condition.'

"Having heard this answer, the Elder removed himself a bit from my presence, did a prostration, and fervently asked God to strengthen him. He thus committed himself to fasting. Afterwards, having made my own supplication, we continued our course to Mt. Sinai, during which time he ate nothing.

19. "When we reached Mount Sinai, the Elder communed of the Immaculate Mysteries, and then he ate something. From Mount Sinai, we went to the Church of St. Menas, near Alexandria, during which time the Elder once more kept a fast. At the Church of St. Menas, he communed of the Immaculate Mysteries and, afterwards, ate a little.

20. "And on our return to the Holy City of Jerusalem, the Elder ate nothing en route. But after we had communed at the Church of the Resurrection of our Lord and God, he ate. During all of this long and arduous journey, then, the Elder ate only three times, strengthened as he was by the Grace of God."

* "Σειρά" (*seira*)=the plaited leaves of a palm tree in the form of a rope ["strand"—*Trans.*]. By stitching these ropes [strands] together in a circular fashion, the monks constructed baskets and other plaited items.

** The book in question was probably one containing Divine Services, in which case the incorrect arrangement of the verses of the *troparia* and the lack of signature notes would have rendered them difficult to chant.

*** Rhosos: an ancient city of Syria, on the Gulf of Issos (Alexandretta), near the Syrian Gates.

**** The Lavra of the Towers was established by James, the disciple of St. Savvas, at the beginning of the sixth century, on the edge of the Jordanian plain near Jericho.

## Hypothesis XXVII

*The rank of Priest is a great rank; therefore, a believer must not seek after it. On the contrary, out of reverence, one should renounce the call thereto, if indeed he believes that his calling is not according to the Will of God, but from human zeal. A believer should act in a similar way whenever he is called to any position of authority or to work as a Teacher.*

### A. From Palladios

1. The peer of all of his contemporaries, the ascetic Ammonios, a disciple of St. Pambo, was exceedingly literate and well-educated. For this reason, the whole population of a certain city wanted him to be appointed their Bishop. To this end, the most eminent of the city's men appeared before the blessed Timothy, Metropolitan of the region, asking him to consecrate Abba Ammonios to the Episcopacy.

Metropolitan Timothy said to them, "Bring him here, and I will immediately consecrate him a Bishop for you."

2. And so, a committee left for the place where he was living as a hermit, all of them strong enough to lay hands on him, in case he should refuse, and take him by force to the Metropolitan. The Saint, however, realizing their intentions, took flight. But when the delegation—with some labor—caught up with him, he stopped and begged them not to insist on their demand. They, however, obdurately insisted. So, St. Ammonios swore to them that he would never accept their request and that he would never leave the desert.

3. Despite all of this, the representatives of the city would not oblige him. In the face of their insistence, while they stood by in astonishment, Ammonios grabbed some shears and completely cut off his ear.

"Let this at least convince you," he told them, "that what you are trying to force me to do is completely impossible, since the laws of the Church forbid someone with one ear [in fact, any person with any form of physical deformity—*Trans.*] to advance to the rank of Priest.

*Righteous Abba Ammonios*

4. The delegation subsequently returned to the Metropolitan and conveyed to him the events that had taken place.

The Metropolitan, reflecting a bit, answered them:

"Let the Jews apply that law. Bring him to me, and even if he should cut off his nose, I will consecrate him. It is enough that he is worthy and that his life is virtuous."

After that, the delegation went again to where Abba Ammonios lived in asceticism, and they asked him anew to accept their offer and to be consecrated Bishop of their city.

In reply, Ammonios spoke to them, assuring them of his firm intention: "Heed me! If you force me to leave my hermitage against my will, I will not hesitate to cut off my tongue, as well."

When the men from the city heard this threat, they finally left him alone and went their way.

**B. From the Life of St. Gregory the Wonderworker**

1. In those days, the Bishop of the Church of Amaseia [or Amasya—*Trans.*] was Phaidemos. He was endowed by God with the gift of prognostication; and through the power of this gift of his, he perceived what treasure was hidden in the soul of St. Gregory the Wonderworker. He thus immediately began thinking about how to persuade him to accept ecclesiastical office, so that such a virtuous man should not waste his life by not working for the good, and to the benefit, of the Church. The intentions of the Bishop, however, were made known to Gregory the Great, and he tried in every way to flee. To this end, he even fled into the wilderness at times.

2. For all of his efforts and despite various machinations, Phaidemos could not succeed in advancing Gregory to the Priesthood. The latter took care, with a thousand watchful eyes, lest he be unexpectedly ordained by the ever-vigilant Bishop. And in the two of them, there was an equally diligent eagerness, though aimed at opposite goals; that is, Phaidemos, on the one hand, wanted to ordain Gregory, while Gregory, on the other hand, wanted to avoid Ordination. Phaidemos understood that, through Ordination, Gregory would be exceptionally devoted to God. Gregory, however, was fearful that, on account of the cares and responsibilities of the Priesthood, there might arise in his life an impediment or some unbearable burden that would distance him from what was, according to the philosophy of Christianity, his sacred task.

3. To accomplish what he so desired, Phaidemos, moved inwardly by some Divine passion, came to the following conclusion regarding his course of action. He decided that he would ordain Gregory, *in spite of* the latter's wish! Thus, without taking into account the distance that separated him from Gregory (a journey of three days on the road), but looking up to God, he reasoned to himself: "At this moment, he and I stand before the All-Seeing God, Who sees us both. Moreover, distance in no way impedes the power of God." Rather than lay his hands on the head of the physically-absent Gregory, he set forth his hand and affirmed in writing his decision to ordain Gregory; and reading the appointed prayers, he thereupon sent this written affirmation to Gregory, ordering him not to disobey his command.

4. Thereby, Phaidemos dedicated Gregory to God and assigned him to a certain city, which up to that time was under the domination of the delusion of idolatry, only seventeen of its citizens being Christians, out of the large number of inhabitants in the region.* So it was that the great luminary, St. Gregory the Great of Neocaesarea, furtively entered into the rank of the Priesthood; however, the formal part of the Ordination, the laying of hands by the Bishop on the head of the ordinand and so on, were later canonically performed.**

**C. From the Life of St. Amphilochios**

1. During the forty years that Amphilochios the Great was struggling in asceticism in the desert, John, Bishop of the Church in Iconium, died. Immediately, by Divine Providence, which knew well the treasure in his heart, Amphilochios was called to be the successor of the departed Metropolitan.

It is, indeed, of worth to recount how his calling to the Episcopacy occurred. At the appointed time, an Angel of the Lord appeared to Amphilochios, saying to him: "Amphilochios, go to the Metropolis of Iconium, the Shepherd of the rational sheep of which it is appointed that you be installed."

2. Amphilochios, being of humble mind, paid no attention to this calling and ignored doing as he was commanded. The calling was repeated on a second night, in the same manner, and again he ignored fulfilling the entreaty, for he was afraid that it was a matter of demonic deception. But seeing the same vision on a third night, wherein the same

Angel appeared and commanded the same thing, the fearless Amphilochios jumped out of bed and, as though to seize his interlocutor, said to him:

"If you are truly an Angel of the Lord, let us pray together."

3. The Angel, so constrained and having bowed his head, cried: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, Heaven and earth are filled with Thy glory." The Angel subsequently grasped Amphilochios by the hand, and the two of them went to the Church. Thereupon, the doors of the Church opened before them on their own, and there shone forth a supernatural light from within the Church, where it appeared that a large crowd of men had gathered.

4. Several of these men took Amphilochios and escorted him to the Holy Table. In the meantime, they brought him something that they were holding, which seemed to be—perhaps—a Gospel Book, and blessed him, saying: "May the Lord be with you." One of the company of these men, who seemed to be officiating at this ceremony, said to those present: "Let us pray that the Grace of the Holy Spirit might come upon him (on Amphilochios)."

Having prayed and said, at the conclusion, "Peace be unto you," they left, it being around midnight. Amphilochios, awed by these strange things, also departed, in order to return to his cell.

5. On the road home, he met seven Bishops, who were on their way to consecrate a Bishop, on account of a Divine vision which they had all had. They recognized Amphilochios—until then unknown to them—from their revelatory vision. So, they took him to the Church once again. There, they gathered all of the clergy and Bishops of the eparchy, proclaiming to them the Consecration of Amphilochios to the Episcopate, as appointed by revelation. Thus, upon the public nomination of the entire eparchy, they elected him Bishop, consecrated him, and installed him as Metropolitan of the city of Iconium.

**D. From the Life of St. Gregory of Akragas**

1. Gregory the Great, Bishop of Akragas [or Agrigentum—*Trans.*], before becoming a Bishop, was informed that he was to be consecrated to the Episcopacy. He quickly retreated and hid in the monastery of Hermes.*** But as soon as he saw—coming from a distance—the Bishops

sent there by the Pope to consecrate him, he ran and hid deep among the garden plants, so that they would not discover him.

2. Up to that point, he had been given refuge by the Abbot of the monastery, who, when pressed by those sent from the Pope, searched every corner of the monastery. Having found Gregory, he ran towards him, troubled, and took him by the arm. He took him by force, in order to turn him over to those who were waiting for him, crying out with threats, since he thought that the Saint was guilty of some great crime.

3. When the representatives of the Pope saw the Saint, they fell at his feet and with gladness embraced him, stating the purpose of their visit; that is, that the Pope, by Divine revelation, having learned in detail about Gregory's life and having received a command from God to consecrate him Bishop of Akragas, had sent them to Gregory, in order to summon him to the Pope.

4. Thus, St. Gregory, no longer able to oppose that which was a matter of God's Providence, yielded and accepted the Episcopacy.

**E. From the *Gerontikon***

1. The Fathers once went to Abba Isaac, in order to have him ordained a Presbyter. He, as soon as he heard this, fled to Egypt and hid in a field among the weeds. The Fathers did not, however, leave him in peace. They pursued him and, by accident, came to that very field, where they settled to rest a bit, since night had in the meantime fallen. They left their donkey, as well, free to graze in the field.

2. Set free, the donkey went to graze at precisely the place where the Elder was hiding. In the morning, the Fathers, searching for their donkey, came coincidentally on the Elder Isaac, who was hiding. The Fathers thus seized him and tried to tie him up. Abba Isaac, however, did not let them do so, saying to them: "I will not flee any longer, for what you seek is the Will of God; and wherever I may flee, the Will of God will find me."

3. Abba Matoes once went from Rhaïthou to the region of Magdala.**** He had with him his brother, as well. The Bishop of the Eparchy prevailed on Abba Matoes and ordained him a Priest. Around the din-

ner hour, the Bishop said to Abba Matoës: "Forgive me, Abba, I know that you did not want this, but I ordained you, so that I might be blessed by you."

4. The Abba, out of humility and not to sadden the Bishop, said: "And I, in my mind, rather wished it a little. What bothers me, however, is the thought that I will be separated from my brother, who for so many years struggled in asceticism with me; moreover, I cannot by myself do all of the Priestly services."

"If you know that he is worthy," the Bishop said, "I will ordain him."

"Whether he is worthy or not, I do not know," Abba Matoës answered; "I know only that he is worthier than I."

5. So, the Bishop ordained Abba Matoës' brother a Presbyter, too. After some time, the two ascetics reposed, neither of them ever having approached the Holy Table in order to offer the Bloodless Sacrifice and serve the Divine Liturgy. As long as he lived, the Elder said: "I do not believe that I will be condemned for my Priesthood, even though I do not serve, since Ordination belongs to those who are irreproachable."

* Such was the diligence of St. Gregory of Neocaesarea, that, as it is told, by the time of his death only seventeen idolaters were left in the city.

** In this final passage, abundant light is shed on the dark theory that the Divine Phaidemos performed an uncanonical Ordination, in the absence of the ordinand—and, indeed, to the rank of Bishop—Phaidemos having acted alone and, in addition, without first ordaining the candidate a Deacon and Presbyter. Although such an Ordination [actually, it was an episcopal Consecration—*Trans.*] could be defended on the grounds that it was performed before the complete enactment of the Church's canonical regulations, nonetheless, by virtue of what is noted here, it is wholly clear that what was called an "Ordination" was a simple election, performed canonically after Gregory accepted his election.

*** In other sources, "Erasmus" [who is also known as "Elmo"—*Trans.*].

**** This city is variously cited as Magdala, Gabala, Babylon, etc. See *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. LXV, col. 292, footnote 41—*Editors.*

## Hypothesis XXVIII

*Regarding the Priesthood, that he who unworthily carries out the duties of a Priest lays up for himself the most severe punishment, while, on the contrary, he who serves as a Priest with care and remains worthy of his profession is benefited greatly in his soul.*

### A. From Palladios

1. I once visited St. Makarios the Alexandrian. Outside of his cell, I found the Priest of a small village lying in front of the door. Part of the skin of the Priest's head was so consumed by cancer that the bones of his skull were visible. However, Abba Makarios had no desire even to meet him.

2. So, I entreated the Saint to take pity on the hapless man, or at least to offer him a comforting word.

"He is unworthy of being healed," he answered me, "since this disease was given to him for his punishment. If you want him to be healed, you should first convince him not to liturgize."

"Tell me why, Father," I asked with surprise.

"Because," he replied, "despite the fact that he committed an immoral act, he liturgized; and for this reason, he was punished. If then, he desists—with fear—from all that he dared to scorn, then God will surely heal him."

3. I conveyed all of these words to the suffering man, and he agreed, vowing before God that he would under no circumstances liturgize again. Thereupon, the Elder received him and told him: "Do you believe that there is a God and that nothing remains hidden from him?"

"Yes, I implore you," he replied.

"Is it perhaps possible to deceive God?" the Elder asked.

"No, master," the suffering man once more replied, "it is not."

"Since," the Divine Makarios said, "you know your sin and the punishment of God placed upon you on account of that sin, correct yourself from now and henceforth."

Indeed, the suffering clergyman confessed his sins and promised not to fall to such a sin in the future, and never, as well, to liturgize again, taking upon himself the status of a layman. After this, St. Makarios placed his hands on the man's head and, within a few days, the cancer on his head was cured and new hairs began to sprout where the wound was. Therewith, the Priest returned to his home, praising God and thanking the Saint.

**B. From St. Gregory the Dialogist**

1. A clergyman of the Church of Aquino was vexed by an unclean demon, and his most holy Bishop, Constantine, sent him to the tombs of many Saints to be healed; but he did not receive healing. After a great deal of time, the ill clergyman was taken to the servant of God Benedict, who, after fervent supplication to God, drove out the unclean spirit and, by the Grace of Christ, made the man well. Having healed him, St. Benedict said to him: "Go, now. Behold, you have been made well. Take care never in your life to eat meat. And do not ask to be made a clergyman of higher rank.* If you should dare to assume Priestly rank, immediately the unmerciful power of the unclean demon will once again befall you."

2. The healed man returned to his home, and for some time he quietly lived in good spiritual health. In the meantime, however, he forgot the order of Saint Benedict, who had healed him. After a number of years, seeing that many of the principals in the list of the clergy were dying, and that those of lower clerical rank were being elevated to the Priestly order, he accepted elevation to the rank of the Priesthood, having forgotten, as we said above, the advice of the Holy Father. Immediately, therefore, the demon, like a wild beast that had been locked up for a short period, entered back into him and pitilessly beset him until his death.

**C. From the *Gerontikon***

1. It is said of Abba Mark the Egyptian, that for thirty years he remained enclosed in his cell without going out at all. The Presbyter of the skete had the custom of going to the Abba's cell and celebrating the Divine Liturgy there. The Devil, seeing the patience and virtue of the Saint, cunningly devised to torment him. Therefore, he arranged, by ap-

propriate incitements, for a man beset by an unclean spirit to visit Abba Mark, under the pretense of wanting to take his blessing.

2. He thus visited the Saint and, before addressing any other word to him, said the following to the Elder: "Your Presbyter still emits the stench of sin. Therefore, do not let him enter again into your cell."

At these words, this Divine man, who was truly faithful, responded: "Others leave their uncleanliness outside; you brought it in to me. Do not forget what the Holy Scriptures say: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged' (St. Matthew 7:1). If my Presbyter is a sinner, God will save him. And it is written in Holy Scripture: '[P]ray for one another, that ye may be healed' (St. James 5:16)."

This is what the Saint said, while praying for his visitor, and he thereby drove the demon out of him. So, the man having been healed, Abba Mark let him depart.

3. After this visit, as soon as the Presbyter came, according to his custom, the Elder received him with great joy. Seeing the guilelessness of the Elder, God, Who is good, showed him a prophetic sign. Behold what happened, as he later related it himself. When the Priest was standing at the Holy Table, in order to perform the Divine Mystagogy, he saw an Angel come down and place its hand on the head of the clergyman. After this, the clergyman became like a pillar of fire.

4. The Elder was amazed at this curious vision. As soon as he had recovered from his astonishment, he heard a voice, which said to him: "Why have you shown such wonder at this thing? If an earthly king will not allow his grandees to appear before him in a filthy state, but wishes them to be clothed in splendor, how much more will Power Divine cleanse those performing the Holy Mysteries from every defilement, when they stand before the glory of Heaven?"

5. Behold yet another related incident. A Presbyter went to visit an anchorite in his place of ascetic struggle and celebrated the Divine Liturgy, since the anchorite was cloistered and never went out. Now, shortly thereafter a certain man visited the anchorite and levelled at the Presbyter numberless accusations. These accusations bothered the anchorite and created in his soul a certain antipathy against the Presbyter. So, when the Presbyter came to liturgize, according to his custom, the anchorite did not let him in.

6. Immediately, however, the anchorite heard a voice say to him: "Men have taken from Me the right of judgment." Simultaneously, the anchorite fell into ecstasy and saw the following amazing vision: He saw a golden well, with a golden rope and a golden bucket. In the well, there was pure and clear water. Standing over the well was a leper, who was drawing water from it and pouring it out. The anchorite, although he wanted to drink from the water, nonetheless hesitated and did not drink, since the leper was drawing the water.

7. Then he heard a second voice, which said to him: "Why do you not drink the water? Did you not see what kind of vessel the leper was using to draw it up? He is simply drawing the water and pouring it out."

8. After this, the anchorite came to, and he understood the meaning of his vision. He immediately summoned the Presbyter and entreated him to celebrate the Divine Mystagogy, as before.

* Readers and Chanters are also called clergy, and it appears that such was the spiritually ill man who is cited.

## Hypothesis XXIX

*Daily Liturgy occasions great benefit; for this reason, we find that this was a practice among the Fathers. In the Liturgy, heavenly and earthly things are united.*

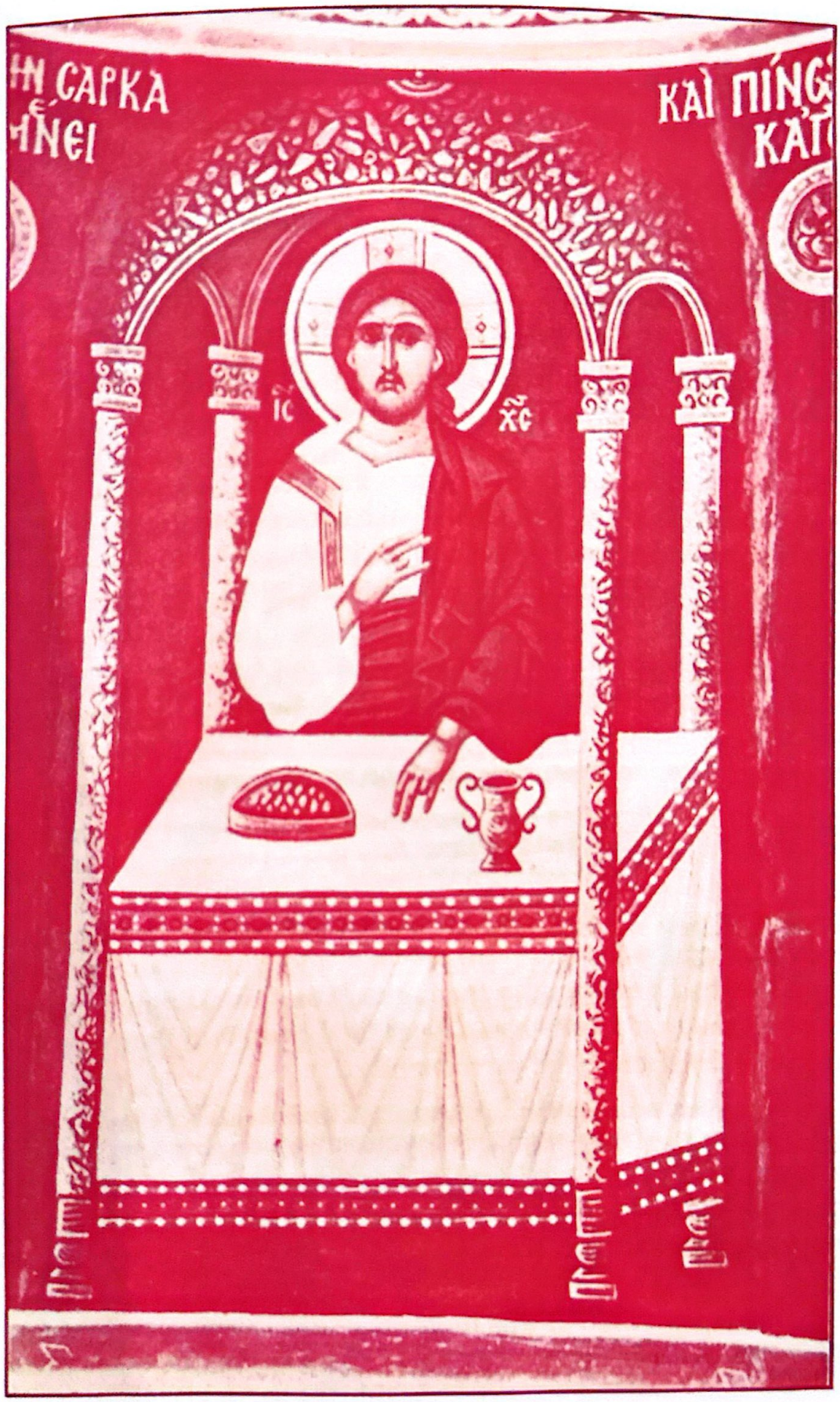
### A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

1. Cassius,* Bishop of the city of Narni [a city in Italy, known in ancient times as Nequinum or Narnia and named after the nearby Nar River, or the "Fiume Nera," as it is called today—*Trans.*], was an extremely pious man, whose custom it was to offer daily to God—with profuse tears—the Bloodless Sacrifice.

2. It was one day, inside the Holy Altar and liturgizing, that he was informed about the following decision of the Lord, by way of a vision in which one of his reposed clergymen said to him: "Work spiritually as you are working, hand and foot, and do not stop this work; for on the Feast of the Holy Apostles you will come to be with me and will be given your reward." And indeed, seven years later, precisely on the day of the Holy Apostles, having celebrated the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist for the feast, and having communed of the Spotless Mysteries, he was freed of the bonds of the flesh and departed to the Lord.

3. Peter, is it not then obvious that if the Bloodless Sacrifice, when offered for those who have reposed, is of such benefit, as we elsewhere said, that it has even greater power to benefit the living? This is the best of all other ways (he obviously means Divine Liturgies and offerings for those who have reposed) in which each person can, for the sake of his salvation, bring about the good for which he hopes after his death. To the soul, it ensures the greatest success for one's departure already liberated from the bonds of the present world, rather than seeking for freedom—still being captive—after one's death.

4. We need, then, to eschew the present life with our whole mind, looking upon it as already lost to us, and to offer up each day the sacrifice of the Flesh and Blood of the Lord. For only this sacrifice has the




*He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.*

power to protect the soul from eternal death.

5. Through this Mystery of the Divine Eucharist, we bring to mind the death of the Only-Begotten Son of God, Who rose from among the dead, that He might nevermore die and that death might never conquer Him: "[D]eath hath no more dominion over Him" (Romans 6:9). Remaining immortal and incorruptible, He is again sacrificed for us through the mystery of the Divine Sacrifice (of the Divine Eucharist). For the Flesh of the Lord in the Mystery—and through the Mystery—of the Divine Eucharist allots the gift of salvation to the people, as does His Blood; do not put it into the hands of unbelievers, therefore, but into the mouths of believers.

6. From this, we are given to grasp the greatness and the worth of this sacred Sacrifice; i.e., that for the sake of our deliverance, it is a continuous portrayal of the passion of the Only-Begotten Son of God. And who, from among the faithful, can doubt that during the time of the Divine Sacrifice, at the voice of the liturgizing Priest, the Heavens are opened up? Indeed, during this Mystery of our Lord Jesus Christ—the Divine Eucharist—there come down from there, from the Heavens, the choir of Angels, the lofty being commingled with the lowly, the heavenly being united to the earthly, and the two becoming one.

**B. From the Life of St. Evthymios**

1. The Lavra of St. Evthymios the Great was already flourishing, and the number of the brothers had reached fifty in number. For each of these a cell had been built in the Lavra,** and the Divine Mystagogy was performed on a daily basis. Near the Lavra, two Presbyters, John and Kyrion by name, lived permanently.

2. Once, on a Sunday, St. Evthymios was celebrating the Divine Liturgy and offering up to God the Bloodless Sacrifice. On the right of Evthymios the Great, holding the mystical *ripidion* (a kind of fan), was Dometianos; the *Trisagion* (Thrice-Holy) Hymn was about to be chanted.

3. Inside the Altar, at this moment of awe, were also Terebon the Saracen and Gabrielios, the brother of Chrysippos, the former next to the Holy Table and the latter deep within the sacred *Bema*.

At that moment—oh, the greatness of the Grace bestowed by Christ

on Evthymios—an astonishing miracle took place. All of those present suddenly saw a flame, like a linen sheet, come down from on high and surround Evthymios the Great, together with Dometianos, who remained in this condition from the beginning of the *Trisagion* Hymn to the conclusion of the Liturgy.

4. This miracle shook Terebon, who, overcome by such awe, came forth from the Altar trembling; and so taken by fear was he, that he dared not, as before (with impudence and effrontery), reënter the sanctuary; but he stood, instead, with reverence at the doors of the Church until the Divine Liturgy ended. This was recounted to me (the writer of the life) some time later by Kyriakos the anchorite, who heard it from the eyewitnesses, Terebon and Gabrielios.

**C. From the *Gerontikon***

1. Various Fathers relate the following with regard to Abba Markellinos of the Thebaid: Always, when exiting his cell on Sunday to go to the gathering (assembly) for the Divine Liturgy in the Church, he would prepare himself—within his soul—by reciting to himself, on his way to Church, excerpts from verses of Divine Scripture, until he entered the Church. These passages he recited noetically, never letting his lips move, so that no one would hear him. When he went in among the congregants, his chest would be wet with his tears of contrition.

2. The Abba himself related that, "throughout the service of the Divine Liturgy, I see the entire Church as though in a flame; however, at the end of the service, when the dismissal is said, this miraculous flame, which encompasses the Church, disappears."

3. A Priest told the following story: A Bishop once visited a village, on a Sunday, and said to the Deacons: "Call for the village Priest, so that we can offer up the Holy Mysteries (the Divine Liturgy)." Indeed, the Deacons summoned the village Priest, who appeared to be a simple and uneducated villager. They took him before the Bishop, and the Bishop requested that he perform the Divine service.

4. Having gone into the Holy Altar, this simple Presbyter was seen by the Bishop to be wholly encompassed, from the moment that he stood before the Holy Table, by fire, though without being consumed.

*Righteous Abba Markellinos*

5. When the Divine Liturgy ended, the Bishop summoned the Presbyter to the vestry and said to him: "Bless me, worthy servant of God!

Surprised, the Presbyter said to him: "How is it possible for a Bishop, who ordains a Presbyter, to be blessed by a Presbyter?"

"I do not have the power," the Bishop replied, "to bless a Priest who presents to God the Holy Gifts while aflame with supernatural light and who yet remains unconsumed. Indeed, he who is least in worthiness is blessed by him who is greater therein."

6. With extreme humility, the Presbyter answered: "Is it ever possible, honorable Master, for a Bishop or Presbyter to celebrate the awesome and life-creating Mysteries and *not* be encompassed by Divine fire?"

7. The Bishop, upon hearing this from the simple Presbyter, marvelled at the purity in soul of the man and at his unfeigned comportment. And he departed most greatly benefited.

* He is honored in the Roman Church as a Saint and is celebrated on June 29. He ascended to the episcopal throne of Narni, a city in central Italy, situated to the northeast of Rome, in 537, and was praised by St. Gregory the Dialogist for his great piety and his love for the poor.

** In essence, a Lavra is a common monastic house, usually surrounded by a large wall.

## Hypothesis XXX

*Not just for the living, but also for those who have reposed, oblations provide great aid.*

### A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

#### Questions and Answers

#### Peter

1. What can benefit the souls of those who have died?

#### Gregory

2. If the sins of those who die are not of the kind that cannot be forgiven without repentance, after death their souls can be very greatly benefited by the offering of oblations for their deliverance; that is, by Divine Liturgies. It is for this reason that many times the souls of the dead have appeared and asked for such. And also those who are far from us are benefited by these Liturgies on their behalf. In some circumstances, they have heard these Liturgies with their own ears.

3. In a certain place, there was a prisoner heavily bound in chains. His wife had the habit, on specific days, of having the Divine Liturgy celebrated on his behalf. After many years, when the prisoner returned to his homeland, he mentioned to his wife that on designated days his chains were invisibly and curiously loosened. Astonished, his spouse confirmed that the days on which her husband was given some relief and comfort corresponded to those days on which she had had Liturgy celebrated on his behalf.

4. In another instance, a sailor, who is alive to this day, recounted to me this miracle that happened to him: Together with Bishop Agathon of Panormos [present-day Palermo—*Trans.*], he was sailing to Rome. During the trip, the sailor was in a small boat that was tied by a rope to the ship. At a certain point, because of the rough seas, the rope broke and

the boat was carried off by the waves and disappeared.

5. The ship, which was carrying the Bishop, was cast ashore by the sea on the island of Ustica [misspelled as "Οὔστιβα" (Oustiba) in the older *and* newer Greek texts; Ustica is a small island on the Tyrrhenian Sea, near Palermo—*Trans.*]. There he waited for three days, on the outside chance that the boat and the sailor would appear, but to no avail. The Bishop came to the conclusion that the sailor had drowned, and thus arranged to celebrate the Divine Sacrifice (the Divine Liturgy) for the repose of his soul.

6. After doing this, the Bishop left for Italy; there, however, in the port of Rome, he encountered the sailor alive! He thus felt immense gratitude that the sailor had been saved, asking him, with friendly and affectionate curiosity, how he had avoided the fearful danger of shipwreck.

7. Thereupon, the sailor related his adventure to him in detail: "For a long time I struggled in the waves with the boat," he said, "which was continually filling with water and which capsized many times, until finally the keel was on top. Maintaining this struggle, as the boat was being swept away by the waves, completely exhausted me. My strength more and more waned with hunger. At some point, I became faint and fell into a state between sleep and wakefulness; that is, I was neither awake nor asleep.

8. "As I was in this state," the sailor continued, "there appeared before me, on the open sea, someone who was holding some bread and who offered it to me. I thereupon, having eaten and been filled, somehow recovered my strength. In a little while, there arrived at that precise point a ship that put me in tow and, subsequently, took me safely to shore."

9. The Bishop listened in amazement to this narration and asked to be told on what day the unknown person in question appeared to him on the open sea and gave him bread. And the sailor clearly verified that this happened on the very day on which the Bishop had celebrated Liturgy for him at Ustica.

**Peter**

10. What you have said I also heard had taken place, when I went to Sicily.

**Gregory**

11. Believe, then, Peter, that such things take place among the living, too, even if the same are not at all aware of the oblations offered for them. From this, it is also demonstrated before all that the souls of the dead are unimaginably benefited from oblations on their behalf, as long as they have not fallen to some unforgivable sin. A story told about a certain Justus, which is elsewhere recorded, shows the benefit which Divine oblations effect for the dead.

12. Now, this Justus was a monk in our monastery, while I was still living there and before I became a Bishop. Once Justus secretly acquired three coins, despite the rules of the monastery. This was kept secret until the time of his death. And it was on this account that he was deemed unworthy of a funeral service, even though he had repented for his fall before he died. His body, without any prayer whatsoever, was thrown in the manure pile, along with those three ill-gotten coins. And I commanded that all of the brotherhood should condemn Justus and his coins, saying: "Thy money perish with thee" (Acts 8:20). This was declared by all of the brothers in one voice.

13. After thirty days had elapsed, I felt sorry for the man and ordered that every day, for thirty days, there be celebrated the Bloodless Sacrifice on his behalf, that he might be redeemed from among those in torment. On the thirtieth day, the dead man appeared, in his sleep, to his brother according to the flesh, Copiosus, who asked the departed man: "How are you faring in the other world?"

The departed Justus replied: "Until today, I suffered greatly. However, I am now very well."

14. The brother of the departed monk, Copiosus, went to the monastery and recounted his dream. And counting the exact number of days from Justus's death until the day on which his brother had this vision, it was confirmed that the report of the refreshment given to the departed's soul occurred on the day of the completion of the thirtieth Liturgy. It is abundantly clear, then, that the departed brother was delivered from his torments, thanks to the power of the oblations for deliverance;

that is, the power of Divine Liturgies.

**Peter**

15. These things that I am hearing are marvellous and greatly please the soul.

**Gregory**

16. The words of the dead to the living support and justify the work of the living on behalf of the dead, so that we should not fall to fear and disbelief.

**B. From the Life of St. John the Merciful**

1. The great St. John appointed and advised the clergy under him to come together and celebrate Divine Liturgies for the reposed. He maintained and assured them that memorial services and Liturgies very much benefited those found in Hell. In support of what he told them, he referred to an incident which had recently occurred:

2. He told them, therefore, about a young man whose homeland was Cyprus and who was a countryman of the Saint. The young man was taken captive by the Persians and carried off to Persia. There he was confined and kept in chains under guard in a prison that was called "Lethe." There prevailed a law among the Persians that those held in this prison should never leave from it alive. For precisely this reason, it was called "Lethe"; that is, that those confined in it were to be *forgotten.*

3. Nonetheless, once several prisoners escaped from there. They reached Cyprus, where they assured the parents of the young captive Cypriot that he had died in the prison. His family, thereafter, had memorial supplications celebrated for him three times a year, under the impression that the youth was dead. In this manner, four years passed.

4. After four years, the young man was able to escape and to return to his native land. Such was the surprise and the inexpressible gratitude of his parents that—the moment they saw him—they thought of him, not as though they had received him as one released from captivity, but as though he had risen from the dead. In the throes of such moving sentiments, they said and did all that was possible for any soul seeing such

an event. Among other things, they told their returning child that, since they had thought him dead, they had celebrated all of the regular memorial services for his soul that are appointed for the reposed. At the same time, they referred to all of the days that they fulfilled this duty; and these were Theophany, Pascha, and the Feast of Pentecost.

5. On hearing these things, the young man recalled a wondrous thing that had happened to him while he was imprisoned; he confirmed to his parents, on his word, that on those very days he had been freed from his chains, under the care of a resplendent man, thus enjoying freedom for a short time. Afterwards, he was locked in his bonds again, as before.

## Hypothesis XXXI

*After death, there is not forgiveness, except for very light sins, and this only with the greatest difficulty. As for those whose acts have merited them Hell, it is impossible for them to exit therefrom.*

**A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist**

1. The Lord says in the Gospel: "Walk while ye have the light" (St. John 12:35). Also, through the Prophet He says: "In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee" (Isaiah 49:8). This saying of the Prophet is interpreted by the Apostle, who says: "[B]ehold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (II Corinthians 6:2). And a similar thought is expressed by the wise Solomon, when he says: "[W]hatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

2. From all of these Biblical testimonies, it is clearly demonstrated that in the moral state in which one departs from this world, in the same state will he appear before the impartial Judgment Seat, in order to be judged.

3. Therefore, one should know that the dead are delivered from various light sins, or sins without moral gravity, by prayers, almsgiving, and the offering of Divine Liturgies undertaken by the living on their behalf. This effort in loving friendship by the living, when reinforced by various other good deeds done by the dead, when they were still alive, can earn forgiveness from minor transgressions for the souls of those who have reposed.

**Peter**

4. I would like, please, to learn this as well: Should we assume that all of those who have been thrown into the fires of Gehenna by virtue of their sins will be unceasingly consumed by fire?

**Gregory**

5. This is completely true and there is no room for any doubt about it. For just as the joy of righteous and good men is unending, so in the same way there shall be no end to the punishment of the evil and cunning. And this the Lord Himself, Who is the Truth, says about them in His Holy Gospel: "And these will go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (St. Matthew 25:46).

6. Since that which is promised to good and virtuous men is true, it is understandable that the threat directed at evil and cunning people is not false. For in both instances, the eternality of these just and true consequences holds. If anyone should be of the opinion and hold that God, being by nature good and a lover of mankind, would not *apply* His threat (to evil persons), let such a one be aware of the fact that to say that God, being merciful, will forgive all things is to declare Him a liar, with regard to His Divine Justice—something which is immensely dangerous even to imagine.

**Peter**

7. I would like to know how it is just to punish with everlasting Hell a finite infraction perpetrated by a person.

**Gregory**

8. If the Heavenly Judge judged man by taking into account only his acts in and of themselves, and not, primarily, the intentions of a man in his heart, you would be correct to posit this question. The unjust certainly sin, and eventually sin comes to an end, since life is limited by the narrow boundaries of time. However, the unjust would like life to have no end, so that they could sin endlessly. And from the fact that they do not cease sinning, as long as they are alive, it becomes clear that they desire to live forever in sin.

9. Thus, it is obvious that the Justice of God is exact and absolute, when He assigns to endless Hell those who neither ceased, nor even wished to cease, during the present stage of life, from sinning.

**Peter**

10. No one who is just and virtuous is pleased by his harshness towards his fellow man; rather, even when a servant errs in front of a righteous master, he is whipped for one reason and one reason alone: that he might be corrected. How, nevertheless, are we to explain the circumstance of eternal and unending Hell for sinners? That is, since the sinners have never been corrected, for what reason are they to burn ceaselessly in the fire of Hell?

**Gregory**

11. The Omnipotent God is not pleased by the punishment of sinners, for He is by nature merciful. But as the Just Judge and punisher of unrighteous acts, the punishment of the unrighteous and sinners is not set aside by God in eternity. All of the unrighteous, who by virtue of their sins have merited eternal Hell, are punished by their own transgressions.

12. While the unrighteous and sinners burn, all of the just, who are found before God, behold with grateful wonder, on the one hand, the Grace given to them by God to enjoy and, on the other hand, the horror of sinners in Hell, which they have avoided. It is in this way that they see the contrast between Hell and their reward, always feeling, eternally, that it is, above all, thanks to Divine Grace that they have been deemed worthy of such advantage.

**Peter**

13. Then how is that, even though they are Saints, the same do not pray for their enemies, whom they will then see burning?

**Gregory**

14. The Saints, Peter, pray for their enemies only when it is possible for their hearts to return to the fruitfulness of repentance and be saved thereby; that is, in the present life. This is also the meaning of the Master's commandment, that we pray for our enemies (those who "spitefully use" us and "persecute" us [St. Matthew 5:44]). This command, as interpreted by the visionary Apostle, tells us to pray for our enemies, so that "God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; [a]nd that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil,

who are taken captive by him at his will" (II St. Timothy 2:25-26).

15. However, when it is no longer possible for the Saints to return these from the work of iniquity to righteousness, then what result will prayer for them produce? It is as useless and unbeneficial as praying for the Devil and his minions, who have already been condemned to eternal Hell. For exactly this reason, holy men no longer pray for unbelieving people—those who have died in impiety, whom they know to have separated themselves from the Church, and who have been committed to eternal Hell—in order that the worth and high esteem of prayer not be dishonored before the Just Judge.

16. If the righteous, while still alive, then, have no sympathy for unbelievers who die in their impiety, even though they have not yet seen these unbelievers tormented in Hell, is it not certain that they will not have sympathy for the lawless when they see their punishment carried out in the life beyond the grave—these righteous ones who themselves avoided every passion and every destructive thing and who have been totally spiritually fused with the lofty meaning and Divine sense of righteousness?

17. So, in the life beyond the grave, the ideas and the thoughts of the righteous will be in complete conformity with the will and the decisions of the Just Judge; hence, they would not dare to importune the Lord by their entreaties, since such an entreaty would not be in accord with His inner, scrupulous disposition.

**Peter**

18. I have no objections at all, for the answers which you have given me to my inquiries are clear. There is one thing more, however, that I would like to learn: How does the soul, since it is immortal, as we have said, succumb to eternal fire?

**Gregory**

19. Since we properly speak of life as existing in two states, we can consequently think of death, too, as existing in two states: it is one thing to live in God, that is, in the realm of blessedness and in God's favor; yet it is quite another thing to live just as we were created and formed, that

is, within the biological confines of nature, as living creatures. In keeping therewith, the soul is both mortal and immortal. It is, on the one hand, mortal when it ceases to live the blessed life in God, whereas, on the other hand, it is immortal as long as it lives spiritually.*

20. In conclusion, it can be said that the soul can in no manner lose its natural essence in the coming life, even when it is damned—on account of its sins in this life—to eternal Hell, which is death, since the soul is deprived of its communion with God. Thus condemned to what we think of as death—that is, eternal Hell—it does not, however, lose the ability to live as a spirit (since the spirit is eternal and immortal), but in all things is deprived of all-joyous blessedness. Therefore, we might think of the soul under punishment as existing in immortal death, in indissoluble dissolution, and in an endless end.

**B. From St. Diadochos**

1. We who love the Lord should pray that at the hour of our departure from the body we will experience no fear; for he who is fearful at that moment will not easily pass through the princes of Tartarus; that is, the demons will have as an advocate for their own evil the temerity of the soul that feels fear.

2. However, the soul that, in the hour of its recall from this world, rejoices in its love of God soars above the ranks of dark spirits with the Angels of peace. Such a soul, continually bearing within itself the fullness of the law, that is, love, acquires wings by the power of spiritual love. Indeed, for this reason those who pass through their life on earth with such moral certainty, who inspire love, shall be taken up in the clouds, together with all of the Saints, at the Second Coming of the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:17).

3. Those, however, who have fear at the time of death, however slight it may be, will remain with the balance of people, as those under trial by our God and King, Jesus Christ, to be tried by the fire of judgement and to experience the benefits or the due consequences of their actions.

**C. From St. Maximos**

### Interpretation of the expression used by St. Diadochos: "to be tried by the fire of judgement."

1. Those who have attained perfection in the love of God and ascend on the wings of the soul, which they have acquired by the cultivation of the virtues, are caught up, according to the Apostle, "in the clouds, to meet the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:17) and are not judged, but will "ever be with the Lord" (*ibid.*).

2. Those who have not, however, wholly attained to perfection, but are liable for sins and falls, these will come before the great Judgment Seat—where, by the contrasting examination of the good and evil acts which they have performed, they are like those who are burning (by virtue of the examination of their consciences and their thoughts); then, the scales being tipped by their good deeds, they will be cleansed and delivered from Hell.

### Comment by the Compiler of the *Evergetinos*

Both St. Diadochos [*vide supra*, Section B3—*Trans.*] and the commentary by St. Maximos [*vide supra*, Section C—*Trans.*] refer, in this instance, to the provisional judgment of the soul, which takes place immediately after death; the universal judgment, which will occur at the Second Coming, refers to all men, without exception, among whom the righteous shall inherit the Kingdom of the heavens, and sinners eternal Hell (St. Matthew 25:46).

* The immortality of the soul constitutes its natural state, by way of its essence.

## Hypothesis XXXII

*What the nature of the Sanctified Gifts (the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist) is, what their power is, and how one should approach them.*

### A. From the Life of St. Arsenios

1. St. Arsenios the Great once related the following story to some monks who were with him:

An elderly monk, wondrous in his works and in the virtues of asceticism, fell to the most serious error regarding the nature of the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist, on account of his simplicity and lack of letters, for which he was distinguished. In point of fact, he maintained and said that the Holy Bread, of which we commune, was not the very Body of Christ our God, but a symbol and image of His All-Immaculate Body.

2. As soon as they were informed of this erroneous and blasphemous notion of his, various of the Elders were grieved and lamented; but doubtful as to what was said, they went to the monk and related to him what they had heard. The Elder assured them that what they had been told was true and that he considered his opinion correct, insisting firmly on it. The visiting Elders did not, however, become upset, but took care to persuade him with many and compelling proofs, by way of which they demonstrated that the Holy Bread is the All-Holy Body of Christ and, correspondingly, that the Wine itself is His Spotless and Life-Bestowing Blood.

3. The Fathers, continuing their illumination of the ascetic Elder, told him, as well, that the visible elements of the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist are actually bread and wine, though, through the prayers of the Liturgy, the sacred text of its performance, and the invocation and the Divine action of the Holy Spirit, they are transformed into the very Body and Blood of Christ. Thus, after this supernatural transformation, we no longer commune from the actual elements of bread and wine, but from the Body and Blood of the Master.

4. However, since for us humans it is difficult, unlike carnivorous wild beasts, to consume blood and flesh, for this reason the very One from Whom we commune appointed that the Mystery should be performed in the form of bread and wine and that these elements should be transformed in an invisible way into the Lord's Body.

5. "Heed," they told him, "what happens in the Mystery of Baptism. The water is, by appearance, water; however, during the rite, it is sanctified with the Grace of the Holy Spirit, such that it is no longer just simply natural water (but a cleansing agent for sins). How, nonetheless, is it possible for the sense of sight to see precisely the unseen and supernatural elements therein, which give rebirth and recreate the person being baptized, setting him wholly free from sin?"

6. With these and similar teachings, the Elders tried to persuade the spiritually-deluded monk. But to no avail! It was as though they were whispering to a deaf man. He continued to doubt and to seek only physical evidence.

7. But the Elders, too, persisted, indeed considering it totally unbecoming that they should show indifference to, or ignore, this elderly monk, whose delusion was the result of naïveté and not intentional blasphemy. So, they forthwith began to pray fervently for him, commanding him to pray, as well, so that his sweat and ascetic labors would not be for naught.

8. After this persistent struggle in prayer, another week went by. Towards the end of that week, all of the Fathers gathered in the Church for the Divine Liturgy. And there—oh, Thy power and Thy Goodness, O Christ!—an awesome and strange thing occurred. As the Divine Liturgy was coming to a close, and the Holy Bread was (on the Holy Table) before the celebrating Priest, there appeared, at that very moment, in front of the eyes of three of the amazed Elders who were present, in the place of the Holy Bread, an Infant on the Holy Table.

9. Afterwards, just as the Priest reached out his hand to divide the Holy Bread into smaller portions, there appeared to these Elders an Angel coming down from Heaven, holding a knife. This Divine Angel, after sacrificing the Divine Infant on the Holy Table, filled the Holy Cup with His Blood. And as the serving Priest divided the Holy Bread into

smaller parts, they saw, correspondingly, the Angel cutting the Flesh of the Infant into smaller portions.

10. When the deluded elderly monk came in to commune from the Immaculate Mysteries, he communed of pure flesh and blood. This strange and fearful spectacle was seen not just by the three Elders, but by this doubting monk. When, indeed, he saw such a thing, he was overcome by fear and thanked God with tears that He had shown him the truth. And the other Elders rejoiced and were thankful for his correction.

**B. From the *Gerontikon***

1. It is said that Abba Apollo had a disciple by the name of Isaac. He was learned and practiced in every good and virtuous work. He, whenever he was in Church and was going to partake of Holy Communion, would in no way allow anyone to approach him or speak to him.

2. He would say, in a certain apologetic manner, that all things are good and beneficial in their own time.* As soon as the gathering for the Divine Liturgy came to an end, he would leave for his cell, as though he were running from fire. Often, after the dismissal of the Liturgy, the brothers were offered a little wine or dried bread, as a blessing. He did not take this blessing—not in order to ignore the blessing of the brothers, but wishing to maintain the peace and silence of the gathering.

3. Once, Isaac fell ill and was confined to his hut. As soon as the brothers learned of this, they went to visit him. Having asked him how he had fallen ill, how he was now, and similar things, they directed the following question to him:

"Why, Abba Isaac, do you leave the gathering immediately after the dismissal of the Liturgy, as though to flee from the brothers?"

4. "I am not fleeing from the brothers, but from the evil brought by the demons. Because just as when one is holding a lighted candle, and stays for a time in the wind, his candle will be extinguished by the air currents, in the same way, when we are illumined by Holy Communion and remain for some time for no good reason outside of our cell, our mind is immediately darkened."

*Righteous Abba Isaac*

5. About Abba Poimen the following is said: Whenever he was planning to go to the Church for the gathering of the Fathers, he would remain for about an hour in his cell, examining his thoughts, and only then would go to the Church.

6. And yet another brother wrestled with the same thoughts about the essence and nature of the Holy Gifts as the elderly monk mentioned earlier, doubting and disbelieving that these were in fact the Body and Blood of Christ, considering them just symbols and representations thereof. He was, in fact, confronted at the gathering by the other brothers. To the brothers, he thus related the following strange and wondrous things, which he saw at the time that the brothers who had challenged him at the monastic assembly were fervently imploring God to show him, by some miracle, the truth and to remove from his soul all thoughts of disbelief.

7. After the dismissal of the Liturgy, the monk recounted the following to the brothers: "After the reading of the Epistle, and as the Deacon was ascending the *Ambon* to read the Gospel, I saw the roof of the Church open, revealing Heaven; at the same time, I saw the Deacon encompassed on all sides by fire.

8. "Afterwards, the Service of Preparation and the offering of the precious Gifts having taken place," he continued, "I saw the heavens open and fire coming down upon the Holy Gifts; and with the fire there was a host of Angels, having in their midst a Child. With them were two other persons, whose beauty was indescribable. Their faces were as radiant as lightning. And thereupon, as the Angels stood around the Holy Table, in a circle, the Child was enthroned upon it.

9. "As soon as the Priests approached to divide up the bread being offered, I saw," he went on, "those two magnificent persons approach, take hold of the hands and feet of the Child, and, with a knife which they were holding, slaughter Him and place His Blood in the Holy Cup. Then I saw them, having divided the Body of the Child into small portions, place these bloody portions of Flesh on the portions of bread; and immediately thereon, the portions of bread became portions of Flesh.

10. "And when the moment of Holy Communion arrived, the brothers partook of these portions of Flesh, and I was given this pure Flesh

from which to commune. I, however, being unable to consume pure Flesh, began to weep. And I sensed a voice, whispering in my ear: 'Why, O man, are you not communing? Is this not what you were seeking?'

"'Have mercy on me, O Lord,' I answered, 'I cannot consume from a body.'

11. "Then I heard that Divine voice of revelation saying to me: 'Learn, then, from this that, even if it is impossible for a man to consume pure flesh, within the Holy Cup there is nonetheless found bodily Flesh, as you have discovered. But since a man cannot eat of a body, for this reason our Lord and God appointed that bread be offered, so that the faithful could commune from it. So, if you believe that under the form of the blessed Bread there exists the very Body of Christ, then you commune of the same.'

"'I believe, O Lord,' I thereupon replied.

"As I said this, the Body which I was holding became bread again. Thanking God, I partook.

12. "As soon as the sacred Mystagogy had ended, I saw the roof of the Church open once again and the Divine and heavenly Powers ascend into Heaven."

13. After the recounting of this splendid miracle, the brothers piously reflected on such a gift of God and departed, thanking and glorifying Him.

* "To every thing there is a season..., a time to keep silent and a time to speak" (Ecclesiastes 3:1-7).

## Hypothesis XXXIII

*How and when we should approach Communion of the Sacred Gifts and in what state our consciences should be.*

**A. From Palladios**

1. The Blessed Moses the Ethiopian, because he was warred upon by the demon of lust, undertook every sort of ascetic effort and every sort of hardship. But he could not find complete relief from this passion.

2. Now, having shown such hard and relentless endurance against this passion, he encountered, one day, the great Priest of Christ, Isidore, who was liturgizing at the Church at Sketis and who said to him: "Cease from now and henceforth, Moses, from wrangling with the demons and do not provoke them in this way; for there are measures in one's warfare with the demons."

3. To this recommendation of St. Isidore, Moses, this diamond of Christ, responded: "I will not cease my warfare with them, since they do not stop annoying me with fantasies in my dreams."

4. Seeing this courageous and heroic determination on the part of Abba Moses, Isidore the Great spoke to him once more:

5. "In the name of Jesus Christ, from this moment on, your inappropriate dreams will come to an end. Therefore, approach with confidence to commune of the Immaculate Mysteries."

**B. From the Same**

1. I knew a Presbyter, whose name was Evlogios, who lived in asceticism on a mountain in the Thebaid. Now, he was so enriched by the Grace of God that, as he would offer the Holy Gifts to those who were partaking thereof, he was able to know the ideas and thoughts of each monk who came forth. Many times, seeing monks approach the Altar, he would stop them and say: "How do you dare draw near to the Holy

Mysteries, in that your thoughts are evil?"

2. "And you," he would say, directing himself to a specific individual, "contaminated your mind last night by recalling improper thoughts of lust"; "You," he would say to another, "think that both sinners and the righteous are able to come before the Grace of God" (that both can be justified); and to a third, he would direct himself, saying, "You, again, think that 'if the Holy Gifts have power, they will sanctify me.'

3. "All of you, therefore, who have impediments, whether by way of indecencies or because of impious thoughts, refrain for a time from the Holy Mysteries and repent in your soul, in order to avoid sin and to become worthy of Holy Communion. Unless you first cleanse your thoughts, you will not be able to receive the Grace of Christ."

**C. From [St. Gregory] the Dialogist**

1. My brother Peter, it behooves us each day to offer to God, with tears, the immaculate Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ. For only this Sacrifice has the power to save our souls from eternal death.

2. However, it is necessary, as often as we celebrate this Sacrifice, to offer it to God with a contrite heart, since in performing the Mysteries, which are the image of the Lord's Passion, we are bound by duty to bring to mind the pure and salvific Sufferings (of Christ) and to mimic them in what we do; that is, only then do we fittingly and truly make our offering to God: by rendering ourselves as a sacrifice.

3. We should always be mindful, both at the time of the Divine Liturgy and at prayer, and by the Grace and through the reinforcement of God, that our souls are safeguarded by the fear of God. Let us take care that the fear of God is never dispelled from within us by languid thoughts or pillaged by vain imprudence, thereby losing in our souls the benefit of compunction.

4. As we know, Hannah was deemed worthy to have that which she sought of God, since after her tear-drenched supplication, she guarded herself against the dispersion of her pious thoughts and remained in the same state of mind as before. For this reason, it is written in the Old Testament that, after her return from Shiloh, "her countenance was no

more sad" (I Kings 1:18), notwithstanding that she did not lose her mindfulness of compunction.

5. A Christian should know, then, that he should properly ask God for the forgiveness of his sins only when he has himself first forgiven those who have transgressed against him. It is not possible for a man to receive such a gift from God, if he has not beforehand cast evil out of his soul. This is affirmed by Christ Himself, Who is the truth. Behold what He said in this regard: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; [l]eave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother" (St. Matthew 5:23-24).

6. From these words of the Lord, we can understand that, just as various transgressions are wiped away by the offering of a gift (by the celebration of the Holy Eucharist), so by rancor they are restored, and for this reason neither will God accept the gift which you offer to Him.

7. This truth, the restoration, that is, of our responsibility for transgressions by way of rancor, is taught to us by the parable of the servant who owed ten thousand talents and was forgiven his debt. As we know, he was forgiven, at first, and freed from the debt; but since, after being shown this beneficence, he peevishly demanded of one of his fellow slaves the measly sum of a hundred pence, he subsequently lost his benefaction and the dismissal of his debt, and on account of his debt of ten thousand talents was condemned to torment (St. Matthew 18:24-34).

8. It behooves us, then, to be reconciled not only to those who are our neighbors, but to those who are far off, and not only externally in form and word, but also internally; that is, to be of irenic mind with all and to submit to them with humility in our soul. And thereafter, we should please God with our persistent and firm desire for good.

9. Indeed, when our Creator actually confirms such a thought in us, He immediately and gladly accepts our gift and, through the Sacred Mystagogy, frees us from the bonds of our sins.

**D. From the Life of St. Evthymios**

1. The Fathers related to me that St. Evthymios was given by God,

aside from other Divine gifts, also this: to perceive from their external appearance the internal movement of the souls of people, as though seeing them in a mirror, and to know in detail with which thoughts each was warring and which of them they had conquered and which, by the power of the Devil, had overcome them.

2. It is further said of him that he confided to various brothers who separately visited him that he had frequently seen Angels with his own eyes: Angels liturgizing with him and approaching the Holy Gifts. When it was time to commune of the Master's Body, he would see some communicants become radiant, while others would become dark—those, that is, who were not worthy of light and of the brightness of Holy Communion.

3. Therefore, on the grounds of such supernatural visions, he would admonish the brothers, protesting against their coming unprepared to partake of the Divine Gifts and excellently advising them, basing himself on the Apostle, telling them that every Christian must be careful and examine himself with exactitude, to determine whether he is worthy. Thus, only with fear should he commune from the Bread and the Holy Cup. "He who approaches," St. Evthymios constantly taught, "must know well that one who approaches unworthily to commune 'eateth and drinketh' (I Corinthians 11:29) condemnation and damnation unto himself.

4. "And so (since one should worthily approach), the Priest, when making ready to offer the prime and highest Sacrifice, tries to protect all those gathered from unworthy partaking, and thus says to those present, 'Let us lift up our hearts.' And having received from them the vow, 'We lift them up unto the Lord,' only then does he take courage to proceed to the offering of the Sacrifice.

5. "And just as he is to perform the Sacrifice, the Liturgist lifts his hands up to Heaven and, indicating the Mystery appointed by Providence for our salvation, says to those present, with a clear and protracted voice: 'The Holy Things are for the holy.' This declaration means something akin to this: since I am, to be sure, a fellow sufferer with you, and do not know what each of you may have done in his life, I am plainly announcing in advance that you should take care, and am placing before each of you this general criterion by which you should deter-

mine the worthiness or unworthiness of your conscience.

6. "If, then, someone has been overcome by rancor, or hatred, or by pride, or by mockery, or by vulgar words, or by indecent desires, or, indeed, has been seized by any other passion, let such an individual not approach to partake of the Holy Gifts, if he has not first cleaned his soul of the miasma of these things by repentance. For, as the Holy Spirit says through the Liturgist, the Holy Things are not harmonious with the profane, but only with the holy. Those, therefore, who are clean in conscience and feel the courage to approach the Lord, '[C]ome unto Him, and be enlightened; and your faces shall not be ashamed' (Psalm 33:6)."

**E. From the *Gerontikon***

1. A holy and clairvoyant Bishop, while giving Holy Communion to the faithful, saw the following striking thing after the Holy Mystagogy: Some of those who approached were of black countenance, as though their faces were covered with soot; others were red-faced, as though on fire, and their eyes bloodshot. All of these, as soon as they communed of the Master's Body, were immediately, thereafter, as though set afire and in flames.

2. In contrast to this, all of those whom he saw approach with bright countenances and arrayed in white—these, on partaking of the Body of the Lord, took on light and were made even brighter, being rendered wholly pure. Among these were both laymen and monastics.

3. After the dismissal of the Liturgy, the Bishop asked of God to reveal to him the meaning of all that he had seen, as well as the reason for the different states of those who came forward to commune.

4. God sent him an Angel, who said to him: "You are inquiring about what you saw? Note, then, that those who have bright faces and white garments are those who live with prudence, with righteousness, and in purity. As well, they are those who are lenient, sympathetic, and merciful. Thus, all of these, since they commune with a pure conscience, shine from partaking of the Holy Things and become even brighter.

5. "Those whose faces are darkened have committed immoral acts and are licentious, living consistently in prodigality and amidst worldly

clamor. And the ones whom you see with red faces and bloodshot eyes, these are those who take pleasure in constant immorality and unrighteousness, who mock and deride others, who are blasphemers, who are wily, and who are murderous.

6. "All of them, even though they partake of the Master's Body, are not only not purified thereby, but are assuredly burned, since, despite a soiled and unclean conscience, they dare shamelessly to commune.

7. "If you, therefore, truly desire them to be saved (and, indeed, for this reason all of these things were revealed to you, so that you could see with your own eyes the sins of your flock), take care to make them better, through repentance and confession, and to help them, with teachings and counsels, to return to God, Who for their sake died and was resurrected.

8. "For thereby those who with their whole souls repent and correct themselves shall have, not only the opportunity to be forgiven their sins by the Master, Who is by nature good and a friend of man, but also to enjoy the future good things. And on you, since you labor for the repentance and salvation of your flock, there will be bestowed a reward, as a worthy emulator of your Master, Who, for the salvation of mankind, 'took upon Him the form of a servant' (Philippians 2:7), humbling Himself, that is, in an unimaginable way and condescending to take a servant's form."

**F. From St. Ephraim**

1. My brothers, let us call to mind those who stand before an earthly king and serve at the throne of a mortal man, heeding the example of the degree of their reverence and fear, as they stand before their king. If, then, they so stand with such reverence and care, are we not obliged, whenever we stand before the Heavenly King, to present ourselves with fear and trembling and with all decorum? Let us watch over ourselves, therefore, and let us not look about curiously, with shameless expressions, at the Mysteries of the Master's Body and Blood that are set before us.

2. For, if Moses dared not even move his mind to thought (in the presence of God), how much more does it behoove us to concentrate on

ourselves and restrain our thoughts, with awe, at feeling the mystical presence of God, when we are present at the appointed time of the Divine Mystagogy? It is written: "[F]or them that honor me I will honor; and they that despise me shall not be lightly esteemed" (I Kings 2:30). You, as man, of course think and are occupied by your thoughts, while He, as God, knows the depths of your heart and your thoughts; for, "neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight" (Hebrews 4:13).

**G. From Abba Isaiah**

1. At the appointed time of the Divine Mystagogy, compel your thoughts and your feelings to be fixed on the fear of God—in His presence—in order to be worthy of the Divine Mysteries and so that the Lord might thereby heal you. If, however, you cannot control your thoughts, then do not approach Divine Communion, so as not to be condemned by God; for Holy Communion signifies union with God.

2. To the extent that we are overcome by the passions—whether anger, resentment, toadyism, vainglory, hatred, or any other passion—we distance ourselves from God. How, then, would it be possible for us to be united to God?

3. The same Abba Isaiah said: "Woe is me, woe is me, for when I communicate with the enemies of God, what possible communion can I have with Him? In such a case, I commune unto my condemnation."

4. At the moment of Holy Communion, let us say: "Holy Things are for the holy." That is, holy things are not given to the unholy but to the holy. If, therefore, I am holy, then what are those things (evil thoughts, the passions) that work within my heart? Woe is me, woe is me, because, though I bear Thy name (that is, I am called a Christian), nevertheless by my works I serve Thine enemies.

**H. From St. Barsanouphios**

1. A brother questioned an Elder, saying: "If some scandalous nighttime fantasy (e.g., a dream) should befall me, and in the morning I am to commune of the Immaculate Mysteries, what should I do?"

The Elder replied: "You may approach Holy Communion, not in

contempt of the sacredness of the Mysteries, but with the sense that you have been wounded and are in need of a physician; then the Lord, Who cured the woman with the flow of blood, will cure you. Let us greatly love the Lord, that He might also say to us: '[Your] sins, which are many, are forgiven; for [you] loved much' (St. Luke 7:47).

2. "When, indeed, you occasion to commune, say the following prayer: 'May these Holy Things, Master, be not unto my condemnation, but for the sanctification of my soul and body.' And then approach with fear, and the Lord will have mercy on you."

## Hypothesis XXXIV

*Regular Communion is very beneficial, while, on the contrary, infrequent Communion is harmful and dangerous.*

**A. From Palladios**

1. The fifty brothers who dwelled in asceticism with Apollo the Great had the custom of communing of the Immaculate Mysteries daily, at the ninth hour. After Communion, having eaten, they would sit with the Elder, that they might learn from him the Divine commandments. They would be with him until night fell, when they would withdraw for a little rest (because about two hours before midnight they would rise for prayer into early morning).

2. The great Apollo was wont to say to them that they should cleanse their minds daily of every evil thought and ready their souls, so that they would be worthy to receive the Divine Mysteries, bringing to mind the salvific Passion (of Christ), that, through the Divine Mysteries, they might be worthy of the forgiveness of their sins.

**B. From the Same**

1. A profligate from Egypt fell in love with a married woman, who was modest and moral. Now, in order to fulfill his passionate goal, he visited a magician (a psychic), telling him: "Apply your magical arts, so that she will either fall in love with me or her husband will throw her out."

The psychic, although he had taken quite a sum of money, could not, by his charms, pervert her chaste mind. Therefore, with his magic, he made it seem to those who saw her that she was a mare.

2. When her husband returned from work and saw her in the form of a mare, he began to cry and grieve at his misfortune. He thus called the Priests of the village and showed them the transformation of his wife into a mare; but even they could not understand anything about this curious occurrence. For three days, the woman ate nothing, while

the hapless husband thought about what to do. On the third day, he thought of St. Makarios. Forthwith, he put a bridle on his wife and led her to the desert—to Abba Makarios the Egyptian, this man of God.

3. When they came to the skete, the brothers asked him: "Why have you brought this mare here?"

"That she might be shown the mercy of God through the prayers of the Saint," the husband replied.

Then her husband revealed the truth: "The mare that you see here is my poor wife; but even I do not know what happened to her."

4. In the meantime, God had revealed to St. Makarios what had happened to the woman, and the Saint implored God on her behalf. Several of the brothers reported to Makarios, the bestower of cures through Christ: "Someone has brought a mare here."

The Elder responded: "You are horses, having the eyes of horses. She is a woman, as she was originally created by God. By the envy of the Devil, she was transformed, in the eyes of those who are deceived, into the form of a horse."

5. So, the husband having brought him his wife, so tragically transformed into a mare, St. Makarios blessed water and poured it over her, as though she were naked from the head down; and reading selected prayers over her head, he healed her. Immediately, she appeared to the others as the actual woman who she was. And the Saint ordered that she be given food.

6. After this astonishing and wondrous cure, the man of God, St. Makarios, gave the woman the following counsel: "Never be absent from Church and commune frequently of the Immaculate Mysteries of Christ. Do not forget that this happened to you because you had not approached the Divine Mysteries for five weeks."

Having cured her bodily and in soul, St. Makarios let the husband and wife depart for their village.

### C. From the Epistle of St. Basil the Great to Caesaria the Patrician

1. "...And the daily partaking of the Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ is good and beneficial, since Christ Himself clearly says: 'Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life' (St. John 6:54).

*St. Basil (practicing asceticism)*

For who could doubt that the frequent and unceasing communication of the Wellspring of Life, that is, of the Immaculate Mysteries, is anything but the power to live in all ways?

2. "So, we commune four times a week; namely, on Sunday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. But we also commune on the other days, when we observe the memory of certain Saints."*

**D. From the Life of St. Evthymios**

1. There once lived in the city of Betagabea [or Betakabea (kome Betakabeom), near Gaza, which may be Bethagidea or Hirbat al-Jundi—*Trans.*], a man by the name of Romanos. He had a brother in the Monastery of St. Evthymios, who was a Presbyter and whose name was Achthabios. Romanos lived the easy life, and in debauchery, in a manner opposite to that of his brother.

2. Now, a certain person resented Romanos for his wealth, and spied on him in a clandestine manner, trying to find a way to capture him. In the beginning, he had no success with his scheme; however, over time his desire to seize Romanos' fortune grew. So, to this end, he went to the city of Elevtheropolis and enlisted a magician, to whom he described exactly the evil which he wanted to do against the man.

3. This magician put into action his magical arts. Romanos, knowing nothing about what was being planned against him, was in the fields, and he thus took no measures against the evil that was being plotted for his destruction. Indeed, God allowed him to be affected, for awhile, by the ruses of the Devil, so as to restore his soul from its great spiritual indifference and indolence and inspire in it meaningful repentance and correction. Thus, Romanos one day fell into a state of bodily torpor, such that he had to crawl back to his home.

4. After a while, this woeful state intensified and the sick man developed a fluidous tumor in his abdomen. The medical arts were incapable of helping him at all. His friends and relatives, being wholly unable to offer him relief, stood around his bed, shedding final tears at his awaited repose. As Romanos lay so seriously ill, waiting to die, he forced his eyes open, so that he could see those who were present and request of them, by eye signals and nods, that they go, leaving him alone

in his room.

5. When he was alone, he felt some peace; and turning his head towards the wall, as that great Prophet Hezekiah had also once done (IV Kings 20:2), he prayed with contrition of heart as follows: "O God of Hosts, Thou hast said that if we repent and cry out, 'then [shall we] be saved' (Isaiah 30:15). Do Thou, O Lord, look down upon me and deliver me from my need and from the calamity which keep me captive." At the very moment that he was praying, it occurred to him to call upon the aid of St. Evthymios the Great as a helper in his entreaty to God—Whom, indeed, he was fervently asking to deliver him from his fearful suffering.

6. In a short time, he fell into ecstasy and beheld someone white-haired and dressed in monastic garb, who had come to visit him. The visitor said, "What do you want me to do for you?"

The sick man then asked, with fear and joy: "Who are you, Master?"

"Evthymios," he answered, "whom you called for just a short time ago. Have no fear in my presence. But now let me see what it is from which you are suffering, and what therapy is needed for your calamity."

7. In response, Romanos pointed to his abdomen. Thereupon, St. Evthymios, having put his fingers together, extended his palm, using it as a knife to open the affected part of the abdomen. From the incision that was made, the offending fluid, which was causing the man's suffering, spewed out, along with a small horseshoe that looked as though it were constructed of tin and which had a number of marks on it. After showing it to Romanos, the Saint placed this curious object on a table. Then he once again used his hand to close the incision, wiping away the scar, and thus restoring the diseased part of his body to its former healthy condition.

8. The Saint then immediately explained to Romanos, in detail, what had happened to him, what the root of this jealous curse was, how the magician had been paid to do this evil, and how he had called upon the demons to do this harm and to destroy Romanos. And St. Evthymios concluded: "In all of this, the machinations of the Devil would not have been able to harm you, had you not given assured inroads to the Devil. Indeed, how much time has passed, to this day, since you even thought about going to Church, let alone to approach for Communion of the Im-

maculate Mysteries? You have lived in neglect and indifference with regard to the duties owed your soul. Since God has taken pity on you and has shown you mercy, from now and henceforth take care not to be negligent about the salvation of your soul."

9. Hearing this, Romanos immediately rose from his bed, entirely healthy, the tumor in his abdomen having completely disappeared. He forthwith summoned his relatives and friends and related to them in detail the visit from St. Evthymios, the miraculous removal of the tumor which the Saint performed with his fingers, and, in general, his whole vision and the miracle. From that day on, he especially honored and celebrated the day on which the miracle occurred, showing each year, as long as he lived, the honor and gratitude that he owed the Saint.

**E. From Palladios**

1. Piously visiting the various hermits of the desert, we came upon a holy man, whose name was Or and who was the spiritual Father and Abbot of a number of monastic communities, in which more than a thousand monks pursued the ascetic life. This holy ascetic, on seeing us, showed great joy, embracing us with a kiss; and, in addition, he blessed us. He then washed our feet with his own hands and, basing himself on the Holy Scriptures, gave us counsel, this holy ascetic being a man taught by God.

2. After that, he allowed us to read the prayers in preparation for Holy Communion, since he had the custom of not eating any material food for his body before he had first assured spiritual nourishment to his soul, which was Communion of the Immaculate Mysteries of Christ. We, together with the members of the brotherhood of Abba Or, communed of the Immaculate Mysteries and, thanking God for this gift of His, were invited to the refectory, at which the Elder was present, feeding us, in the midst thereof, on the words of his teaching.

**F. From Abba Cassian the Roman**

1. "Once," Abba Cassian recounts, "we were visiting the skete of Abba Serinos, a holy and God-bearing man. In our discussion, among other subjects of benefit to the soul, we asked him about the matter of those who become demonized.

"'Elder,' we said, 'why in our country are the demonized shunned, such that no one even wants to approach them, and all fear and avoid them? Moreover, they are never allowed to commune of the Immaculate Mysteries. This is forbidden on the basis of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who instructs us: 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine' (St. Matthew 7:6).

2. "To these inquiries the Elder replied as follows: 'If we believe that nothing happens, save by the Will of God, and that grievous things and temptations are ordained by Providence for our benefit, then we must not ignore those who suffer, but should sympathize with them as members of our bodies, ceaselessly and fervently imploring God on their behalf and enduring their afflictions with love and compassion. This behavior on our part is in concord with the teaching of the Apostle, who says: "And whether one member suffer, all members suffer with it" (I Corinthians 12:26).

3. "'With regard to offering the Holy Gifts to demonized persons, I have never been taught by my Elders that anything impedes such, but rather, indeed, to the contrary. If possible, they should be given the Divine Mysteries every day. Moreover, the Gospel passage that you cite has not been properly understood, for it has no application whatever to the subject at hand. When the Lord commands that we "give not that which is holy unto the dogs" (St. Matthew 7:6), He does not have in mind Holy Communion; rather, this was said by Christ in reference to Christian doctrine and expounding on lofty Christian teachings.

4. "'For the Holy Things are not given to the demons as food, when we commune a demoniac, but for the sure cleansing of the soul and body and for the immolation of the evil spirit which has taken up residence in the bodies of the demonized. And with the Communion of the Holy Gifts, this evil spirit flees, as though being burned by fire. In this way—that is, through Divine Communion—Abba Andronikos** and many others were cured.

5. "'If, then, we continually keep a demoniac from partaking of the Holy Gifts, we allow the demon who holds sway over him to grow in impudence and more frequently and more viciously to attack the person, since the latter is increasingly separated from aid from above, of which aid he is assured by Holy Communion.

6. "'Therefore, we should not separate from the beneficial and therapeutic protection of the Holy Gifts those who, against their wills, are acted upon by the demons—that is, demoniacs—but only those who willingly give themselves over to sins and behave like demons by their unclean activities.

7. "'Such are much more vile than the demoniacs, since they direct the acts of the demons, which act secretly within them, without it showing, and therefore deserve to be punished by a chastising scourge, in order to cure their vice. But their harsh and unrepentant hearts amass for them "wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Romans 2:5) and "the worm (punishing them) dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (St. Mark 9:44).'"

* In the original text of the *Evergetinos*, the following is added: "On which (days), I suppose, the Saint liturgized, since the many (spiritual) cares which occupied him made it impossible for him to liturgize daily." In the present edition, this is not added as it appeared in the original text, but has been moved here [as a footnote—*Trans.*], since it does not belong to the excerpt from St. Basil. It is likely a note added by the hand of the compiler, Father Paul Evergetinos.

** The editor of the *Patrologia Latina*, where the Latin original of this text may be found (Vol. XLIX, col. 710), speculates that the Abba Andronikos mentioned here may have been St. Andronikos, who along with his wife, St. Athanasia (whom he wrongly calls "Tharasia"), became anchorites under the spiritual direction of Abba Daniel. This presents several problems. First, sources assign the two Saints to different centuries: either the fifth (*The Prologue of Ohrid* by St. Nikolai [Velimirovich], Agnes B.C. Dunbar, *A Dictionary of Saintly Women* [London: George Bell & Sons, 1904]) or the sixth (*The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. X, p. 234). As well, there are two Abba Daniels among the desert Fathers, the first, a fifth-century ascetic in Sketis, and the second, a sixth-century ascetic, also from Sketis. Chitty notes that the second Abba Daniel, in his writings, recounts the story of Sts. Andronikos and Athanasia, though one cannot with any certainty conclude that they were contemporaries (*The Desert a City*, p. 147 [see the endnotes for Hypothesis XIX [•••], Book III])—*Editors.*

## Hypothesis XXXV

*Any who are under ban (excommunicated) and not communing during the Divine Liturgy should exit the Church together with the Catechumens.*

### A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

1. There were once two virgins, who lived in asceticism. They came from a distinguished family and lived on their family estate, near the monastery of the blessed Benedict. An earnest and pious man provided them with all of their needs, so that they did not have to go out of their home. Nonetheless, the two nuns, out of conceit bred by their noble background, daily abused this good man without reason and with insults and snideness.

2. So he, no longer able to endure this derision, which was indeed unbearable, retreated to the counsel of the man of God, St. Benedict, relating to him the attacks levelled against him by the two nuns. Thus, the Saint summoned the two nuns to him and told them austerely: "Correct yourselves and control your tongues, because if you do not correct yourselves, you will not be allowed to commune."

This last thing he told them, not in order to stop them from communing, but out of a desire to make them correct themselves in the face of such a threat.

3. They, however, did not at all heed this recommendation of the Saint, and thus had no intention of putting an end to their thoughtlessness. After a short while, they both died and were buried in the Church.

4. Thereupon, a traumatic event took place. When the Divine Liturgy was being celebrated, and at the moment that the Deacon announced that the non-communicants should exit the Church, a woman, who had served the two nuns as a nanny and who regularly offered up Divine Liturgies on behalf of their souls, would see the two of them come out of their graves and exit the Church.

5. From the many times that she had seen them leave the Church at the exclamation of the Deacon, and their inability to remain in the Church at the time of Holy Communion, this woman was reminded of what the man of God had told them while they were alive and of his threat of the deprivation of Holy Communion if they did not correct themselves. She thus immediately ran to St. Benedict and, falling at his feet, told him of her fearful vision.

6. When this holy man heard of this frightful adventure of the souls of the two virgins, he, inspired by his innate kindness and sympathy, took a *prosphoron* and gave it to this pious woman, the former nanny of the nuns, and told her (since he was not himself a Priest): "Go and give this *prosphoron* to the Priest, so that he can perform a Liturgy for the salvation of their souls. When this is done, they will no longer be under the ban of excommunication."

7. And, to be sure, just that came about. When the Priest celebrated a Liturgy using the *prosphoron* given him by the Saint, and the Deacon chanted the usual exclamation—"Those who are not partaking, exit the Church"*—the pious nanny did not see the nuns exit the Church.

8. In the life of St. Matrona we also encounter the following incident regarding Divine Communion and the exchange of the kiss of peace that took place among the brothers. St. Matrona entered the monastery of St. Basianos as a monk, feigning that she was a eunuch. Thus, having been accepted into the monastery as a monk, she stayed for a number of years, without the monks ever realizing that she was a woman. After some time, St. Basianos learned the truth through a revelation.

9. So, the Saint, calling her to him, looked at her sternly, saying to her with a certain harshness: "What did we do to you, woman, that you would so audaciously treat us in this way, risking temptation and making fun of us in such an inapposite manner, by succeeding in masquerading as a man for such a long time?"

10. St. Matrona understood St. Basianos' words immediately, made a prostration, and embraced the feet of the Saint. With a barely audible voice, and with great humility, she said: "My master, I joined your flock, not because I wished to bring temptation, but because I wanted to flee the contrasting temptations of the world and its snares."

11. After this apology, the Saint said in response: "However, how have you dared, since you were a woman, to approach the Holy Mysteries with a bare head?** And how, moreover, have you dared, without shame, to kiss the brothers during the kiss of peace?"

12. To these things, the blessed Matrona answered: "My master, regarding my approaching the Divine Mysteries, I always feign illness and thus never remove the cover from my head; and in this way I have communed. With regard to the symbol of love for the brothers, that is, the kiss of peace, I have never avoided it, since at that moment I never imagine that I am coming near to a man, but a person yearning for and achieving Angelic passionlessness."***

**B. From the *Gerontikon***

An Elder said: "Many times, when the Deacon would say, 'Kiss ye one another,' I saw the Holy Spirit on the mouths of my brothers."

* This corresponds to our [Orthodox—*Trans.*] exclamation: "Ye who are catechumens depart, let none of the catechumens [remain]."

** As is well known, a woman communes with her head covered according to the recommendation of the Divine Paul (I Corinthians 11:5-6).

*** Subsections 8-12 are not from St. Gregory the Dialogist, but are excerpts from the Life of St. Matrona. See her life by St. Symeon Metaphrastes in *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CXVI, cols. 928D-929B.

## Hypothesis XXXVI

*That burial in the Church benefits the faithful, but incurs further punishment on those condemned to eternal fire.*

### A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

#### Questions and Answers

#### Peter

1. I would like to learn if we are to believe that the souls of the departed are somehow benefited by the burial of their bodies inside the Church.*

#### Gregory

2. If the departed do not have serious sins, they are benefited by burial in the Church; for whenever their relatives come to Church and see their tombs, they remember them and offer prayers to the Lord on their behalf.

3. As for those who committed serious sins during their lifetime, when their bodies are buried in the Church, they do not obtain redemption of their sins, but rather greater condemnation. This is demonstrated by the following incidents.

4. The most pious Bishop Felix of Ostia [or Portus, signifying the port of Rome—*Trans.*], from the village of Sabina, told me about a nun there who, while abstaining from shameful pleasures, nevertheless did not try to correct herself when it came to impudence and inappropriate speech.

5. When she died, they buried her in the Church. Now then, the Church warden saw, by Divine revelation, the dead nun being brought before the Altar, where she was sawed in half. One half of her body was given over to the fire and was burned, whereas the other half remained

unburied.

6. At daybreak, the warden awoke and recounted his vision to his friends and relatives. This revelation demonstrates that those whose sins were such that they are unable to escape punishment after death are in no way helped by the burial of their bodies in sacred places.

7. Here is another incident. I personally knew the patrician Valerianus, who lived and died in the city of Brixa [present-day Brescia—*Trans.*]. Having received money from Valerianus' relatives, the Bishop of this city allotted a space in the city Church for his burial. Now, until deep old age, this Valerianus had led a life of debauchery and never wished to bridle his passions or his disorderly conduct.

8. So, when he was buried in the Church of the Martyr Faustus, the Martyr appeared the following night to the sacristan of the Church and sternly told him the following:

"Go tell the Bishop to throw out of my Church that filthy body that has been buried here. If he does not do so, in thirty days hence he will die."

9. The sacristan was afraid to tell the Bishop of this revelatory vision. And though he beheld the same dream a second time, he once again refrained from relating it to him.

And so, what happened? Thirty days later, the Bishop, though in perfect health, went to bed one night to sleep, whereupon he suddenly died from an unknown cause. From this, one can infer how greatly the sinful Valerianus was condemned by his burial in the Church.

10. Hence, it is clear that all of those who have committed serious sins during their lifetime receive no help at all from burial in sacred places, but rather receive further condemnation for this audacity; and those who bury them are also counted guilty of sin.

* According to the custom of those times, the more distinguished of the dead were interred in crypts within the Church, or below it, or even under the Altar. This custom is condemned by many of the Fathers of the Church, one of whom is St. Gregory himself. The frightful examples cited in this chapter are repeated word-for-word in the *Sacred Rudder,* in a footnote to the interpretation of the eighty-third canon of the Sixth Œcumenical Synod.

## Hypothesis XXXVII

*That a sumptuous burial also brings no small harm to the soul; wherefore, lovers of God greatly desire and prefer humble and inglorious burial.*

### A. From the Life of St. Ephraim

1. When St. Ephraim was nearing his departure from this world, he strictly set forth his final wishes to his disciples:

2. "Do not chant hymns to the dead Ephraim or bury me dressed in luxurious raiment. Nor should you place my body in a special tomb; for I have made a vow to God to be buried amongst strangers, since I also am a stranger and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. If one of you, out of love for your father, has prepared for me a luxurious burial raiment, may he give it to the poor."

3. Such counsels did St. Ephraim give to those encircling him. One of these disciples, among the most earnest and warmest in his feelings for St. Ephraim, having prepared a luxurious and costly burial raiment in which to clothe the dead body of the Saint, was grieved upon hearing this command, since he would not be able to carry out what he had planned and desired.

4. He thus decided not to give the raiment as alms to the poor, deeming it better to give as much money as the raiment was worth to those in need. But, it seems, out of profound ignorance of the benefit of obedience and imagining that giving this money as alms to the poor would please St. Ephraim, he acted according to his own will and judgment—even though the Saint had commanded that the raiment, and not money, should be given to the poor.

5. Only after what befell him did he understand what he had done; for he was immediately punished for this disobedience, becoming possessed by a demon and by evil thoughts, thereby receiving fair punishment for his deed. Under the sway of this demonic passion, he ran, before all, to the bed of the Saint and began beating himself, behaving

like one possessed, wringing his hands, rolling his eyes, gnashing his teeth, foaming at the mouth, and doing other such things characteristic of mental derangement. He was handed over to the Devil by Divine Providence so as to be punished by him, since he had obeyed the Devil and ignored the commandment of his spiritual Father.

6. What, then, did St. Ephraim—who could clearly see hidden thoughts and unconfessed deeds—do upon seeing him in this condition? Illumined by the Holy Spirit, he said to his tormented disciple:

"Do you understand that what you are now suffering is the fruit of sin? What evil have you done that has driven you to such great and fearsome peril?"

7. And he, coming out of his madness, confessed his sin, revealed his disobedience, and censured the injurious thoughts that had led him to disobedience. Following this frank confession, the Divine Ephraim took pity on his disciple and freed him from the demon simply by his blessing and by laying his hands on his head.

**B. From the Life of St. John the Hut-Dweller**

1. When the wondrous St. John learned by Divine revelation that he was approaching his end, he asked to see the mistress of the house where he had been taken, who happened to be his mother.

2. When his mother, who so yearned for her missing son, came to him, he restrained his heart and tongue with remarkable self-control, and did not reveal to her who he was.

3. Addressing her, he said—in a humble manner—peaceful words:

"Be assured that all of the good you have done for me, a destitute stranger, will pass on, as noble and good deeds, to our common Master, as you yourself well know. For it was He Who said: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me' (St. Matthew 25:40).

4. "But now that my end is approaching," St. John continued, "I wish to ask one more thing of you, calling upon God—Who knows and examines our intentions—as my witness. My request, then, is this: When, shortly, I shall die, do not adorn my dead body with other burial garments

*St. John the Hut-Dweller*

or bury it somewhere in an ornate tomb. Rather, bury me in the rags I am wearing and on this very spot where, with my own hands, I built my hut."

5. Having so instructed his mother, he made her promise that she would fulfill these wishes. She irrevocably pledged to do so, being unaware that she was his mother; for St. John had prudently thought to extract this promise before he was recognized. Following this, during the final moments of his life, his parents recognized him as the very John for whom they had been searching. And then he himself, having already bound them with the aforementioned oaths, revealed his story to them and forthwith reposed.

6. Overcome by love for her son, his mother immediately forgot his biddings and straightaway removed his rags and dressed him in splendid and luxurious garments. As soon as she began doing as she desired, however, her limbs became paralyzed; for her dead son would not permit this transgression of her vow and would not suffer a sumptuous burial. Indeed, what great love did the blessed John have for Christ in his soul, so as to reckon his rags, as a symbol of his struggles, more desirable than maternal love!

7. Now then, when the Divine John's father saw his wife so paralyzed, he immediately reminded her of the biddings of their child. Thus, they removed the luxurious raiment from the Saint's body and clothed it anew in his rags, whereupon his mother's paralysis left her. In this way, the son brought his parents to reason. By this miraculous event, God demonstrated that not only are the commandments of parents to be respected and kept by their children, but parents must also be faithful to the entreaties of their children, when such requests are in accordance with God's Will.

**C. From the Life of St. Pachomios**

1. St. Pachomios once visited the monasteries that he himself, by the Grace of God, had founded. While approaching one of them, he came across the funeral of one of the brothers, who had lived a life of slothfulness. The brothers of the monastery followed the bier with a great deal of splendid psalmody, accompanied by the monk's parents, relatives, and all of his friends.

2. When they saw the Saint, they momentarily left the funeral bier and besought him to pray for them and for the brother who had died. After offering due supplication and prayer to God, St. Pachomios said to those in the procession:

"Cease your psalmodies."

He then ordered that they bring the dead monk's raiment and burn it before everyone, and that his body be buried without the customary funeral service.

3. As might be expected, this command provoked the resistance of his parents and relatives, who were astounded by the strange sight and fervently begged the Saint to permit the celebration of the funeral service. The Saint, however, did not yield.

4. So the relatives continued to murmur against St. Pachomios, saying to him:

"Father, what is this strange thing that we see? Who would not have mercy on a dead man, even if he were his enemy? The calamity of death is enough to move even a wild beast to compassion! This conduct with regard to the dead does not befit your holiness; and as for us, we are greatly disgraced thereby."

Some of the other relatives called out in indignation:

"It would have been better had we not come at all. And it would have been better had this one here not become a monk, for he would thus not have left us in eternal grief."

5. Such things, and a great deal more, did the relatives and friends say in their attempt to compel St. Pachomios to permit the funeral service for the dead monk. When the commotion had died down somewhat, the Saint calmly and peacefully replied:

"Truly, my brothers, I pity the dead man more than you do; and all the more so, since you concern yourself only about his dead body, whereas I care for his immortal soul. For the sake of his soul, then, as his Father, I ordered that this thing, against which you now protest, be done.

6. "And you, with your supposed honor for the dead, increase the pain he experiences beyond the grave. I, on the other hand, by ordering that his dead body be dishonored in this way, endeavor to ensure him some defense before the unerring Judge—or at least a little relief. For precisely this reason, I do not concern myself with the body that has

died, but rather with his immortal soul, which shall once again receive this body, then imperishable, at the resurrection of the dead.

7. "Apart from that, I myself will be judged by God as one seeking to please men, if I yield in this matter; for by ensuring the reposed brother temporary and ephemeral good repute, I shamelessly betray the true interests of his soul, which will undergo eternal punishment beyond the grave.

8. "God, as a wellspring of goodness, seeks opportunities richly to bestow on us His abundant benignity and to forgive sins not only in this life, but also in the next. For when our Lord Jesus Christ said that those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, 'either in this world or in the world to come' (St. Matthew 12:32), He implicitly gave us to understand that certain sins may be forgiven after the present life.*

9. "Hence, if we, who have been granted to receive, as a sacred gift, knowledge of the Savior's Divine healing science, do not offer to each person the appropriate medicine for his salvation, we will quite naturally be regarded as disdaining the souls of our brothers and will know that which is written: 'Behold, ye despisers, and look, and wonder marvellously, and vanish' (Avvakoum 1:5).

10. "I therefore beseech you, in order that our lost brother might be freed from the dreadful punishments awaiting him in the next life, and that his soul might enjoy some repose, bury him without psalms. For God, being good and all-merciful, is able to accept our lost brother even without our funeral supplications."

11. At these words, the brother was indeed taken and buried on the mountain, without psalmody, as the Saint had ordered.

**D. From the *Gerontikon***

1. A few days before Abba Arsenios departed from this world, he gave the following instructions to his disciples:

"Do not bother to do anything on my behalf [the texts are corrupt here; in the *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. LXV, col. 105 B, we read: "...to make offerings of love (*ἀγάπας*) on my behalf"—*Trans.*]; for if I have done

deeds of love, I will now have to find them [in the other life]."

2. Seeing him close to death and his strength diminishing, his disciples became disquieted. Noting this, St. Arsenios said to them:

"Do not worry; my time has not yet come. When it does come, I will let you know. I repeat to you again, however, that God will judge you at His dread Judgment Seat, if you hand over my body to anyone (to bestow honors upon it)."

With some uncertainty, his disciples asked him:

"What, then, are we supposed to do? For we do not know the order of the burial service."

Abba Arsenios replied:

"Do you not know how to tie my feet together with a rope and drag my body to the mountain (so that the wild beasts and birds can eat it)?"

3. When the last moments of his earthly life approached, the brothers saw Abba Arsenios weeping, and they said to him:

"And you, Father, fear death?"

"I assure you that this fear has been with me since the time I became a monk," he replied. And with that, he reposed.

4. One of the Fathers recounted the following story:

"There once lived an anchorite in the desert of Neiloupolis. A layman saw to his needs, bringing him necessities from the nearby city. In the same city where this layman dwelled, there also lived an impious rich man.

"It came to pass that the latter died. He was given a splendid and majestic funeral, and the entire city, with the Bishop at its head, followed the funeral procession with candles and incense.

5. "That same day, the pious layman went to the desert, as was his wont, to take the anchorite a little bread. Imagine his terrible disillusionment, when he found the anchorite torn into pieces by a hyena. (In contrasting the image of the majestic funeral of the impious rich man with the tragic death of the pious anchorite, not only was he grieved, but even greatly scandalized.)

6. "He fell with his face to the ground, entreating God with great fervor and many sighs:

"'My Lord, I will not arise until Thou shalt enlighten me as to the

meaning of these things. Even after death, the impious rich man was surrounded by the glory and honor of men, whereas this anchorite, who served Thee day and night, received such a tragic and inglorious death. How are these things to be explained?'

7. "Indeed, God, Who ever yields to the entreaties of the simple and insignificant, sent him one of His Angels, who told him with sweetness:

"'The impious man performed one good deed during his life, so the Lord permitted him to enjoy [his reward] by means of his splendid and regal funeral, that he might not find any repose in the next life. The anchorite, on the other hand, who was adorned with every virtue, had also fallen into a minor error, being human, which is why the Lord permitted him to be punished here, through this tragic death, that in the next life he might be found perfectly pure before God.'

8. "Having thus been fully enlightened as to this matter, the virtuous layman departed for his home, glorifying God for His just judgments, unfathomable as they are to man."

9. Living nearby an earnest brother, who constantly experienced Godly mourning in his soul, dwelt another brother. One day, when the latter was preparing to go down to the city, he said to his virtuous brother:

"My brother, be so kind as to take care of my garden until I return."

The other responded:

"Believe me, my brother, to the best of my ability, I will not be negligent."

10. When his neighbor had departed for the city, the brother said to himself: "Lowly one, now that you have time, attend to the garden." But he remained standing for his prayer rule from that evening until morning, and did not cease chanting and praying with tears for the entire next day.

11. Returning late, his neighbor discovered that his garden had been destroyed by porcupines. With some bitterness, he said to the brother:

"May God forgive you, my brother; for you did not attend to my garden."

The brother replied:

"Abba, God knows that I did my best to guard the little garden. I

trust that He will grant the fruits thereof in time."

"In truth, my brother," replied the garden keeper, "it has been entirely destroyed and uprooted."

12. The earnest brother, wishing to console the garden keeper, told him:

"I am aware of what you are telling me, my brother. God, however, is able to make the garden bear flowers and fruit anew."

"Come, let us water it," said the keeper of the garden.

"You go and water it now," the brother answered, "and I will water it at night."

13. Another time, when it had not rained for quite some time, the garden keeper sadly said to the earnest brother:

"Believe me, my brother, that if God does not help, this year we will have no water at all."

And the brother replied:

"Woe to us, my brother, if the wellsprings of the garden run dry; then, indeed, we will not be saved."

Now, whereas the garden keeper was speaking about the tangible garden, the other brother meant tears and the secret garden of the heart, which he watered and cultivated that it might blossom.

14. So when, some time later, the good struggler was approaching his end, he summoned his brother to him and said:

"Be so good as to tell no one that I am ill. Sit next to me this day. When I die, take my body and cast it into the desert for the wild beasts and birds to eat; for I have committed many sins before God and am not worthy of burial."

15. Hearing these words, the garden keeper replied:

"Believe me, Abba, my soul will not allow me to do what you are telling me to do."

The ill brother replied:

"May the trespass be on me. I promise you that if you listen to me and do as I tell you, I will help you from that place where I am going—if I am able."

16. Indeed, as the brother had foretold, he reposed that same day. The garden keeper did as his brother had ordered, casting his naked

body into the desert. (The two lived twenty miles from the city.)

17. The third day after his death, the departed one appeared to the garden keeper and said to him:

"My brother, I pray that God have mercy on you, as you had mercy on me. Believe me, God has shown me great beneficence, thanks to the disdain shown to my body, which was left unburied. God said to me: 'Behold how, for your great humility, I have commanded that you abide together with St. Anthony.' And as soon as I had an opportunity, I entreated on your behalf.

18. "Hence, I advise you to leave aside your sensible garden and to care for the noetic and incorruptible garden of your soul. For I learned, when my soul departed from my body, that my tears extinguished the fire into which I was bound to be cast after my death."

* This is a very subtle point that requires great care, lest one fall into error. The Church has characterized as "deadly" certain sins that cannot be forgiven after death, if they have not been confessed. Forgivable sins, according to St. Pachomios, may be forgiven if the person had the inclination and disposition to confess them, but was not able to do so. Thus the phrase in the prayer of forgiveness: "...one who has by negligence or indolence failed to obtain forgiveness...."

## Hypothesis XXXVIII

*That teaching is not the work of just anyone, but only of one foreordained by Divine Providence as fit for such: he who puts into practice what he teaches and who has conquered his passions. He who does not have an aptitude for education must watch over himself lest, wishing to instruct others, he should neglect and harm himself. There are some—though rare—who are from the beginning guided directly by the Holy Spirit. Not only are they not in need of human advice and guidance, but they are even able to become the spiritual guides of others. We should marvel at such people, but not attempt to imitate them, ignoring our own weakness.*

### A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

1. A nobleman by the name of Venantius [there is a corruption in the Greek text, which reads: "Βαλέντιος" (Balentios), both in the older and newer versions—*Trans.*] possessed land in the region of Samnium [wrongly called "Amnia" in the Greek texts—*Trans.*]. The overseer of this land had a son named Honoratus who, ablaze from his youth with yearning for the heavenly homeland, had given himself over to fasting and abstinence.

2. He was very early on distinguished for his great spiritual achievements, wherefore his master, Venantius, seeing his progress, granted him his freedom. In the region of Fondi [wrongly identified as "Φρούδος" (Phroudos) in the older and newer Greek texts—*Trans.*], Honoratus built a monastery that numbered two hundred monks, with Honoratus as their Abbot.

3. One day, an enormous boulder detached itself from the mountain overlooking the monastery and began hurtling down the mountainside, threatening to crush the monastery and kill the brothers.

4. When the Saint saw the boulder hurtling with such momentum

towards the monastery, he immediately began to call unceasingly on the name of Christ our Savior. Raising his right hand, he made the sign of the Cross in the direction of the boulder, which miraculously came to a halt, remaining suspended in place. Even to this day, all can see it suspended, in precisely the place where the Saint, by the power of Christ, ordered it to stop.

**Peter**

5. I must ask you, then, venerable Father: Did this eminent person, who thereafter became the Teacher of so many disciples, previously have a teacher of his own?

**Gregory**

6. I have not heard tell that he ever served as another's disciple. Such a gift of the Holy Spirit [as his], however, cannot be set down as a law and rule among men, such that one might dare to become a director of others without first having learned submission. Nor is it permissible for one to demand obedience from those subject to him, if he himself has not first learned obedience.

7. There are some people inwardly instructed by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, so that even if they have not been given the opportunity to learn from men, they are never abandoned by the wisdom taught them inwardly by the Holy Spirit. This, however, only happens to the perfect, whose lives are so free from the influence of evil and sin that they are unable to fall into impiety or indifference through the examples of those weaker in character and spiritual progress.

8. It is good for one to be very careful not to reckon himself similarly filled with the Holy Spirit and thus pitiably refuse to serve as another's disciple, thereby becoming a teacher of error. The mind that has been possessed by the Holy Spirit clearly bears the marks of such an overshadowing, which are (spiritual and wonderworking) power and humility. If this power and humble-mindedness join into a perfect and masterly way of thinking, they then clearly reveal the presence of the Holy Spirit.

9. Thus, as we read in the New Testament, St. John the Baptist did

not have a Teacher. Nor did the Truth Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, as man, taught the Apostles through His bodily presence, call the Baptist in order to add him to the choir of the Apostles. Rather, He taught him by inner illumination, while by all appearances leaving him free.

10. In this way also did an Angel lead Moses into the desert, where he learned the commandment unknown to him by human means.* These things, however, as we have said, are worthy of respect and wonder for the more infirm, but are not to be imitated.

11. Our Holy Father Benedict was also shown to be taught by the Holy Spirit; for he, like the morning star, coming from the region of Nursia, rose in the city of the Romans. While still an adolescent, full of bodily vigor, reckoning the whole world and its blossom (ephemeral beauty) as but dry grass, he turned away from it.

12. He settled in a desert place, which the locals called "Lakkon" ["Lacus", or Lake—*Trans.*]. In this area, he found a cave, where he remained in ascesis, practicing to the utmost all of the virtues. And, as a pure and precious vessel, he was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, by which his heart was cultivated; and he brought forth abundant, beautiful fruits of teaching to all those who came to him.

13. Indeed, many people from the neighboring regions flocked to his ascetic cell for the sake of spiritual edification. The light of his virtue could not long be hidden, as under a bushel (St. Matthew 5:15), but by Divine Providence was rightly placed on a candlestick, that its brightness might be imparted to others.

14. St. Benedict, then, living in asceticism in the aforementioned cave, drew many devout Christians to him by the brilliance of his virtues and the signs and amazing miracles worked through him by God. Among these Christians were some who came forward beseeching him to direct them spiritually, as a good shepherd does his sheep. St. Benedict did, indeed, accept them and undertook their spiritual supervision. And, by the power of Christ, he founded twelve monasteries in that place, placing twenty monks in each. Together with him, he kept a few, dwelling with them in asceticism.

15. Of like kind were the preëminent Fathers: Sts. Anthony the Great, Evthymios the Great, and other outstanding Fathers of the desert. They also, like St. Benedict, did not have human Teachers, but God and their consciences; wherefore, they shone forth as luminaries of the world. Such also were St. Apollo and the Holy Stylites Daniel, Alypios, and Symeon the Great.

**B. From the Life of St. Synkletike**

1. The Blessed Synkletike said: It is very dangerous for a person who has not first, through a practical life, risen to the heights of perfection to venture to teach. For, just as one who receives strangers into a dilapidated house is the cause of his own destruction, as well as that of the others, if the house collapses, so also is he who dares to teach others without first establishing himself by spiritual building; he places himself and those who come to him in tremendous danger.

2. Such a one calls his listeners to salvation by his words, while setting a bad example for them by his negligence and his deeds, thereby preparing for them the perdition of their souls. Mere teaching, unaccompanied by the deeds of the one instructing, resembles drawings made with chalk.

3. Such drawings are swiftly wiped away by the blowing of the wind and drops of rain, whereas teaching that is humbly put into practice cannot be obliterated for the whole of eternity. For the practice of virtue combined with the word (teaching) fashions the concrete achievements of the soul, thereby giving the faithful an eternal model of virtue and goodness.

**C. From the *Gerontikon***

1. Abba Poimen said: "To teach one's neighbor is the work of a spiritually sound and dispassionate person. For what good is it to build another's house and to destroy one's own?"

2. The same said again: "A person who teaches others but does not himself put into practice what he teaches resembles a spring that, while providing water for others and cleansing everyone else, is unable to purify itself and is filled with every kind of filth and uncleanliness."

3. Abba Serinos, together with his disciple, Isaac, once visited Abba Poimen, saying to him: "Abba, what can I do for my disciple Isaac, who gladly listens to my teaching?" Abba Poimen replied: "If you wish to benefit him, teach him virtue in practice, through your own example; for he who merely listens to the words and speech of another remains idle in the practice of virtue. Whatever you teach him in practice, through your example, on the other hand, will remain permanently in his conscience and will incite him to put it into practice."

4. Abba Hyperechios said: "He is truly wise who teaches not by beautiful speech but by his deeds."

5. An ascetic Elder said: "If a person has the ability to speak with beautiful words and well-turned phrases, but is without deeds, he resembles a tree with abundant green foliage but which bears no fruit. And precisely as a tree that is full of fruit also has bright green leaves, in the same way does teaching befit the person who cultivates the good."

6. An Elder said: "If you see someone who has fallen (into a marsh) and you can help him, offer him your cane and pull him out. If you cannot pull him out, leave him your cane, lest you be lost along with him.

7. "If you try to give him your hand but cannot pull him out, there is danger that he will pull you down with him, and you will both perish." He said this with regard to those who seek to help others beyond the measure of their own ability.

8. Another Elder said: "There is no mind more impoverished than one that essays to philosophize about things pertaining to God without being overshadowed by the power of God. He who teaches, either in Church or in his cell, is obliged to be the first to put into practice what he teaches. For it is written: 'The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits'" (II St. Timothy 2:6).

9. An Elder once said, with regard to another Elder, who had great love for all and who would visit monks and laypeople: "A lamp illumines many; however, the lamp's burner [in Greek, the "mouth" of the lamp—Trans.] is incinerated in the process."

*Righteous Abba Orsisios*

10. Abba Orsisios said: "When unbaked brick is laid as a foundation near a river, it does not withstand the damp even for a day. But when it has been well baked in a furnace, then it endures like stone. The same thing happens to a carnal-minded person who has not, like Joseph, been tried by fire through fear of God (Psalm 104:17-19). When such a person accepts a position of authority, his spiritual edifice breaks down and is destroyed.

11. "Such people encounter many temptations, living among men. A person who has sound knowledge of his abilities is right to avoid the weight of authority, whereas those who are firm in faith remain unmoved thereby.

12. "If one were to examine closely the life of St. Joseph, he would ascertain that he was not of this world. For consider how many temptations he endured, and in what land he lived. And yet, despite all of that, he did not swerve from the path of virtue. So let us, also, knowing our own limitations, struggle against evil, in order to escape the judgment of God."

13. Abba Poimen said: "If a person remains in his place in life, he will never be troubled."

14. The same Abba said: "If a person has knowledge yet does not act according to it, how is he able to teach his neighbor?"

15. A brother asked Abba Poimen: "Living together with me are other brothers. Would you like me to direct them?" The Elder replied: "No. Rather *you* be the first to perform the necessary spiritual work, and if they desire a higher spiritual life, they will see your example and do the same." The brother asked again: "Father, it is they who want me to direct them." Then Abba Poimen said: "Be for them a model, not one who lays down the law."

16. A brother asked an Elder: "If, Abba, a brother tells me about discussions that took place beyond the monastery, would you like me to tell him: 'Stop, do not relate such discussions to me'?"

"Not at all," the Elder replied.

"Why not?" asked the brother.

"Because," the Elder said, "we also are unable to keep such exacti-

tude in our actions. There is chance that, having told our neighbor not to do such a thing, we might later find ourselves doing the same."

"So what should I do?" the brother asked again.

"If we so wish, we may keep silent," the Elder answered. "This way suffices for our neighbor to understand what is correct."

17. Abba Peter asked Abba Isaiah:

"What is a servant of God?"

And Abba Isaiah replied:

"Insofar as a person cultivates any passion whatsoever, he is not yet reckoned a servant of God, but continues to be a servant of that passion to which he is subject. And as long as he is dominated by a passion, he is unable to teach another who is possessed by the same passion. For it is a disgrace for him to teach against a passion, before being liberated from the passion himself; or even for him to beseech God to free his neighbor from this passion, as long as he himself continues to be dominated by it."

18. Abba Isaiah said: "Whence am I to know that God has appointed me to tell someone to do one thing or another? How can I give orders to another, while still being under repentance for my sins? For he who once fell into sin continues to be under repentance and cannot feel himself secure, since he does not know if his sins have been forgiven.

"A sign that God has forgiven his transgressions is the following: When none of the passions that used to cause him to sin moves in his heart, even when another speaks to him regarding these passions. About these passions, he feels fear and trembling up to the time that the soul appears before the Judgment Seat of God.

19. "If someone asks you to advise him about something, and you put your soul in mortal danger by speaking to him about freedom (from passions), but then he returns to you and tells you all the same things again, without having progressed at all with regard to what you advised him, it is clear that he did nothing of what you told him. You, then, should distance yourself from him; for such fruitless and barren conversations and discussions deaden your soul.

20. "It is a great achievement for a person to sacrifice or abandon his entitlements, which he believes are according to God, and to put into practice the advice of the one instructing him according to God.

21. "The man of God, Abba Nisthero, who beheld the glory of God while living with the sons of his sister, did not direct them in any way, but left each to do as he pleased, whether they came to good or to bad, without concerning himself about them."**

22. He said, with regard to Cain and Abel, that, "there being neither the law nor Holy Scripture in their age, who taught them to do one thing or another? If God does not teach man what he must do, in vain does he toil."

23. Abba Isaiah said again: "When one teaches his neighbor, there is danger lest his soul be diverted (from its primary task of inner edification) and fall; and by desiring to bring his neighbor back to a good state of nature, he puts his soul in the fearsome peril of being demolished and lost. For, while you teach your neighbor, telling him to do this or that, you must think carefully about what you are doing and must keep in mind that, wishing to build your neighbor's house, you bear a pick-axe and might demolish the house of your own soul.

24. "He who disregards his own sins, yet still makes it his business to correct others, is as ineffective in his wholehearted entreaties and in making supplication to God as he is in knowing his own wretchedness and infirmity."

25. He said again, with regard to teaching others: "Be wary, lest you fall into that which you teach others to avoid. If you fall into this error, you are unable to teach others."

26. He said yet again: "Woe unto us; for though we are full of transgressions, we admonish and teach others who greatly differ from us and are our superiors. And having an entire beam in our own eye (St. Matthew 7:3), we condemn our brothers for miniscule faults and grow wroth with them, as though we were entirely blameless. We bind others with heavy and insufferable burdens, while we, as supposedly weaker in body, abstain from even touching such burdens (*cf.* St. Matthew 23:4).

27. "Woe unto us, for we have abandoned our one and only task and hasten, with presumption and impudence, to teach others the very practical virtue with which we should be occupying ourselves. Woe is he

who puts others to work while avoiding the labors necessary for the achievement of virtue. Woe unto us, who set up tribunals and judge and teach others, though we ourselves have greatly lapsed from the effort to cultivate the good."

**D. From Abba Mark**

He who plays the part of the wise and teaches, without cultivating the good, is increased in injustice, and his labors, according to Holy Scripture, enter into "the houses of strangers" (Proverbs 5:10).

**E. From Abba Isaac**

1. Do not attempt to teach others something that you have not managed to make your own or put into practice in your own life, lest you bring shame on yourself later, when the discrepancy between your behavior and your words reveals your hypocrisy. If it becomes necessary to speak, then speak as a disciple and not with boldness, as though you were a greatly-experienced man of wisdom. And before you begin to speak, condemn yourself; show that you reckon yourself lower than the one to whom you are speaking.

2. It is good to teach men the good and, out of concern for them, to make them depart from error by leading them to the truth. For this was the way used by Christ and the Apostles, and it is most effective.

3. If, however, a person feels that, by such behavior and constant association with others, his own scrupulosity is diminished with regard to his contemplation of spiritual matters, or that the calmness of his heart is disturbed and his inner knowledge is clouded (since his mind is in need of concentration and watchfulness), and that in his attempt to heal others his own spiritual health is destroyed, his mind becoming agitated by the freeing of his own will, such a one should remember the words of the Apostle.

4. For the Apostle says: "[S]olid food belongeth to them that are of full age" (Hebrews 5:14). In other words, this food is for those who have exercised the senses of their souls, who keep them in good health, and, as such, are able to receive every kind of food (by which I mean the assaults of the senses from divers stimuli), that the heart might not be

harmed by various encounters with people and things and turn back (in terms of spiritual progress), thus hearing, by way of example, the proverb: "Physician, heal thyself" (St. Luke 4:23).

5. Hence, let each one judge himself, sustaining his own merit, and, instead of ministering unto others with words, endeavor to help them by his good way of life and to teach them by his deeds. And even if he lives far from men, he is still more able to benefit them by his zeal for good deeds than by words, given that he himself is still sick and in need of healing. For, as the Lord says, "[i]f the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (St. Matthew 15:14).

**F. From St. Barsanouphios**

1. At one point, a brother in the *cœnobion* where St. Barsanouphios lived in stillness learned that another brother was undergoing spiritual warfare. So, he immediately went and counselled him, as best he could, without himself having reached any degree of perfection in what he was advising. And so what happened? The warfare which, until that moment, had been troubling the other brother was transferred entirely onto him!

2. Seeing himself burdened by this warfare and perceiving that he was undergoing it because he did not admit his infirmity to his brother, and since sufferers must turn to experienced Fathers for advice, he went to the Elder (Barsanouphios) and confessed the matter to him.

3. Having listened to him with attention, the Elder said:

"My brother, there is no other way for you to be freed from this warfare than to reproach yourself for all that you said as a Teacher to your brother; then, God will forgive you."

Doing as the Elder advised him, and censuring himself for everything he had said, the brother made a prostration and was immediately relieved of his spiritual warfare. And he gave thanks to God.

**G. From the *Gerontikon***

1. Amma Theodora said: "A Teacher must be a stranger to the passion of love of power and completely estranged from the passions of vainglory and pride, not being deluded by flattering words, blinded by

gifts, or conquered by anger. On the contrary, he must be forbearing, lenient, humbler than all, and have been authorized by the Church to teach. He must be tolerant, as affectionate as a guardian, and must desire the salvation of the soul rather than bodily repose."

2. An Elder said: "Do not teach out of season, that is, before the appropriate time; otherwise, you will be imperfect as to prudence and wisdom."

3. The same said again: "He who instructs others concerning their salvation 'must be [the] first partaker of the fruits' of his teaching (II St. Timothy 2:6). For how will he be able to correct someone else when he has not corrected himself? Or how will one possessed by avarice, and harried by this demon, be able to teach another regarding charity? And how, again, can he who occupies himself with money exchanges and transactions, thereby frittering away his days with worldly cares, teach others regarding future good things?

4. "What is more, those who are taught by such a teacher will pay more heed to his deeds than his words; and they will thereby be taught to be indifferent to the eternal and will constantly struggle for the sake of ephemeral things, as they see their teacher do.

5. "To such a teacher, then, whose deeds are in opposition to his words, God gives admonition: 'Why dost thou declare My statutes and takest up My covenant in thy mouth? Thou hast hated instruction and hast cast out My words behind thee' (Psalm 49:16-17). And in another instance, God says reprovingly: 'Woe to them on account of whom My name is blasphemed' (*cf.* Isaiah 52:5). It is good to teach others, but only when the teacher puts into practice those things that he teaches, such that he does what he says and is known for those things about which he is silent (out of humility). For blessed is he who not only teaches, but who first does what he teaches (*cf.* St. Matthew 5:19)."

6. An ascetic Elder said: "If you teach someone concerning the spiritual life, accompany your words with tears and compunction; otherwise, say nothing at all, lest you die spiritually, wishing to save others with words devoid of every act of virtue."

**H. From St. Ephraim**

1. It is preferable for you to learn with diligence and wisdom than to teach others detrimentally through your improper actions. He who trains himself trains the one who follows him, and he who teaches himself teaches his neighbor.

2. Do not hound your brother out of love of power. If this thought of yours—that is, to become a master and leader of others—is not from God, nothing will come of it. If, on the other hand, it is from God, then, even if you should be hiding among the provisions, like Saul (*cf.* I Kings 10:22), the Lord will fetch you from there to make you a leader of his people.

* The Saint, here, means the commandment to free the Jews from slavery to the Egyptians that Moses received when he saw the miracle of the burning, but unconsumed, bush (Exodus 3:2).

** The spirit of this entire passage, which ends with the example of Abba Nisthero, is the following: A person must, above all, concern himself with his own inner spiritual edification and avoid setting himself up as a teacher of others, when he himself has not reached the measure of exactitude in what he teaches. In this regard, the Holy Apostle James advises: "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" (St. James 3:1).

## Hypothesis XXXIX

*That for one who makes judgments by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, whatever his judgment may be, it is in accordance with God, even if he is not a Priest. Teaching others is permitted by God not only to Priests, but also to men who are pure in soul. What the mystical Priesthood is. In what manner those in the desert may partake of the Immaculate Mysteries, if there is no Priest.*

### A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

1. When the Liturgy had been celebrated with the *prosphora* offered by St. Benedict, who was not a Priest, on behalf of the two virgins who, after their death, would rise up and depart from the Church where they had been buried, since the Saint had excommunicated them when they were still alive (they would exit when the Deacon exclaimed, "Let all those not partaking depart"), the virgins' former nanny no longer saw them leaving the Church at this point. [See this account in Hypothesis XXXV, Section A, above—*Editors*].

2. From this, Peter, we may conclude and believe, beyond doubt, that when the Bloodless Sacrifice, with this *prosphora*, was offered on their behalf, they were immediately granted forgiveness by God and loosed from their bond, through the intercessions of the Blessed Benedict.

**Peter**

3. It is indeed marvellous how that venerable man, while still in the flesh, could loose souls from bonds.

**Gregory**

4. Peter, were they perhaps not still in the flesh, who heard from God the Divine injunction, "Whatever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in

Heaven" (St. Matthew 18:18), and whose places are held today by those adorning the thrones of the Holy Apostles and Shepherds (that is, their successors)?

5. Moreover, the Creator of Heaven and earth descended from Heaven to earth precisely that earthly man might be vouchsafed such great glory. And that man might be able to make such judgments, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, He granted him to enjoy such lofty gifts. For man's sake God received flesh—apart, of course, from our infirmity—and the power and majesty of the Incarnated God was not diminished by this human flesh.

6. That man has been vouchsafed Divine spiritual gifts by the Spirit I will likewise demonstrate to you by the following occurrence. A man named Felix, the scion of a prominent family, was acquainted with the renowned Father Equitius. For the sake of learning, he made so bold as to ask him, albeit with all due reverence:

"My Elder, it is well known that you do not have the dignity of the Priesthood or the leave of the Patriarch of Rome, to whom you are subject, to preach. How, then, do you dare to do so?"

7. To this, the venerable St. Equitius replied: "I myself have thought about these things, and I will reveal to you how I received permission to preach. So, take heed: One night, I had a vision. A very handsome youth came to me and placed a small blade (a scalpel), like those which a physician uses, against my tongue, saying: 'Lo, I have put my words in your mouth.' From that day, even if I want to be silent, I cannot; for God compels me in the work of preaching."

**Peter**

8. I would like to learn the spiritual work of this Father, who was counted worthy of such lofty spiritual gifts.

**Gregory**

9. Listen, Peter, the work is the result of the spiritual gift, and not the spiritual gift the result of the work; for, in the latter case, Grace would not be Grace. Spiritual gifts, therefore, precede the various spiritual works. And these gifts, again, increase in accord with the work that

follows them. What additional work do you want of him, given that his virtuous life complemented his preaching?

10. So strong and intense was his yearning to bring people close to God by means of his preaching that he was veritably consumed by zeal. To this end, though burdened with responsibilities in his capacity as Superior of various monasteries, he nevertheless did not lose an opportunity to speak in the Churches, cities, marketplaces, and, in brief, to frequent all of those places where the faithful assemble, so as to awaken in his listeners' hearts a yearning for eternal life.

11. His renown for preaching also reached the city of Rome. Some, then, moved by envy, accused him before the Patriarch [of Rome; i.e., the Pope—*Trans.*], saying the following, among other things:

"Who is this boorish and uneducated person? Why has he assumed the authority to speak, presenting himself as an authentic preacher (thereby arrogating the ministry of Your All-Holiness, Master) and willfully going around various places without the leave of his Patriarch? If, then, you see fit, order your deputy to go and bring him here, that he might learn what the order of the Church is!"

12. The Saint's accusers did not cease condemning him before the Patriarch, ultimately persuading him to send the Protector Julian [a protector, or "*δεφένσωρ*" (*dephensor*), from the Latin *defensor*, was an officer appointed to defend the rights or privileges of the Church—*Trans.*) to take the Saint by force. The following night, when Julian had departed and was preparing to fulfill his command, the Patriarch saw a fearsome vision in his sleep, which terrified him. In this vision, he was severely rebuked for presuming to disturb the Saint. So the Patriarch immediately rose from his bed and urgently informed Julian not to dare to remove the Saint from his monastery.

**B. From St. Maximos**

He who prepares his mind for spiritual struggles and expels shameful thoughts from his soul is like a Deacon during Divine worship. He who, by knowledge of existing things, illumines his mind and expunges knowledge falsely so called is like a Presbyter. And he who perfects his mind, anointing it with the Holy Chrism of knowledge and worship of the Holy Trinity, is like a Bishop.

## C. From the Life of St. Luke the New

1. When the Archbishop of Corinth once occasioned to travel to Constantinople, he also passed by the hut of St. Luke,* wishing to see him and to receive his blessing.

2. St. Luke received him with great joy and, when they had sat down and begun to converse, St. Luke asked the Archbishop, among other things:

"Tell me, Master, how are we who live in the mountains and deserts, on account of our many sins, able to partake of the Divine and dread Mysteries? For, as you see, in this desert place, not only can a Liturgy not be celebrated, but it is not even possible to find a Priest!"

3. The Archbishop, listening to St. Luke's question readily and with interest, replied:

"You are right, my Father, in wishing to learn about a beneficial and very important matter. For, as the proverb has it, good is not good unless it is accomplished by good means.

4. "Heed this, then: A Priest must without fail be present for a Liturgy to be celebrated. If, however, some serious need arises and such a thing is by no means possible, then with all piety place the Holy *Artophorion*, containing the pre-sanctified Gifts (from Great Thursday), on the Holy Table, if there is an oratory in your cell. But if the cell has no oratory, then place the holy *Artophorion* on a very clean stand.

5. "Then, when you have laid a small cloth next to the Holy *Artophorion*, place the portions on it, cense, chant the Psalms from the *Typika* or the *Trisagion*, and recite the Symbol of Faith. After that, make three prostrations, crossing your arms, and—without touching It with your hands—partake with your mouth of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, saying 'Amen.'

6. "Instead of holy wine (*nama*) (the Blood of the Master), drink a small glass of (unblessed) wine. After using this glass for Holy Communion, however, do not use it for any other purpose. When you have partaken in this way, carefully gather up the remaining portions with the communion cloth and place them in the Holy *Artophorion* with great care, lest a precious Pearl fall and be trodden upon."

7. St. Luke heard the foregoing with interest and warmly thanked the Archbishop for his counsel.

* At that time, St. Luke lived in asceticism on Mount Ioannitra [or Ioannitzes—*Trans.*] in Phokida [or Phokis—*Trans.*], later moving to Steirion [or Steiri—*Trans.*].

## Hypothesis XL

*That the true Shepherd must readily undergo every danger for the sake of his sheep and care wholeheartedly for them.*

### A. From the Life of St. Peter of Alexandria

1. St. Peter was denounced to the impious Diocletian for estranging many from idolatry and attracting them to Christianity. The tyrant, in a rage, summoned five tribunes and dispatched them, together with the soldiers under their command, to Alexandria, ordering them to slay St. Peter. "If any of the so-called Christians dare to offer you resistance," he told them, "put them to the sword without the slightest hesitation."

2. When the soldiers whom he had sent arrived in Alexandria, they found the Blessed Peter teaching in the Church and informed him of the imperial decree. Without any protest or exclamation, St. Peter eagerly followed those who were seeking him. But as soon as the inhabitants of the city realized what had happened, they were at once stirred up against the soldiers sent by the Emperor.

3. Great unrest then broke out in Alexandria. The tribunes, fearing lest this unrest prove detrimental to them, threw the Hierarch into a jail situated near the Church. The entire populace spent the night before the doors of the jail, since they had great respect for their Teacher, and, because of this love, regarded being deprived of him as an affliction no lighter than death.

4. When, on the following day, the tribunes came with the soldiers and attempted to remove the Saint from confinement, since they were in a hurry to execute the Emperor's decree, the people surrounded them and would not allow them to take the Hierarch out of the jail, saying that they were prepared to die rather than leave their Teacher in the hands of those who intended to slay him.

5. The tribunes and the soldiers thus withdrew empty-handed, suspecting that this resistance might develop into a rebellion. They next

*St. Peter of Alexandria*

took counsel as to how they might remove the Saint from the jail. They decided to use force in order to carry out the Emperor's decree, and even to put to the sword any who were minded to resist.

6. When the Patriarch learned of the tribunes' decision, fearing lest members of his flock should perish because of him, he made a forceful decision—and one worthy of his great soul—whereby his flock would suffer no harm and he himself, as was his desire, would end his life with a martyric death.

7. He immediately summoned an old man, distinguished for his loyalty and piety, from among those who were waiting outside the jail on his behalf. By way of this old man, he notified the tribunes that they should come in secret, the following night, to the southern side of the jail and listen attentively, there, for him to knock with his staff from inside. He then told them that they should make a hole in the wall at the very spot where they would hear him knocking, so that they could arrest him and thereby fulfill the order assigned to them.

8. On being informed of the Hierarch's plan, the tribunes gladly assented to it and made haste to execute it. They arrived the following night, accompanied by several stonemasons, but without their soldiers, and waited at the designated place.

9. When the Blessed Peter became aware of their presence, he quietly went to the farthest side of the jail, where he could escape the attention of his fellow inmates, and there, according to the agreement, knocked on the wall, thus indicating his location to those waiting outside. As soon as they heard the signal, they set about making a hole in the wall and, with no effort at all, opened up a passage for the Saint.

10. In the meantime, another incident concealed what was going on. When the stonemasons had begun to make a hole in the wall, a violent wind started to blow and a great deal of rain began to fall, which, by Divine Providence, brought about the realization of the Saint's purpose. The sound of the wind and the rain muffled the din of the iron and the shattering of the stones, stopping the ears of the Alexandrians, so that none of them could detect what was happening.

11. Thus, after a hole had been made in the wall, the Divine Peter

surrendered himself to those who desired to arrest him, imitating in this respect, too, his Teacher, Christ the Savior, Who at the time of His saving Passion gave Himself up to His deicidal crucifiers, ensuring safe conduct for His disciples, saying to those who were arresting Him: "[I]f ye seek me, let these go their way" (St. John 18:8).

12. This good Shepherd, therefore, sacrificed his life for the sake of his sheep, and, after being arrested by those charged with putting him to death, was led away to the place of his martyrdom, where he submitted to a martyric death in the following way:

13. First, he knelt and stretched out his hands, and, after gazing fondly up to Heaven, gave thanks to God. Next, after signing his whole body with the sign of the Cross and saying "Amen," he slightly loosened the *Omophorion* that he was wearing, bared his neck, inclined his head, and called upon the executioner to behead him.

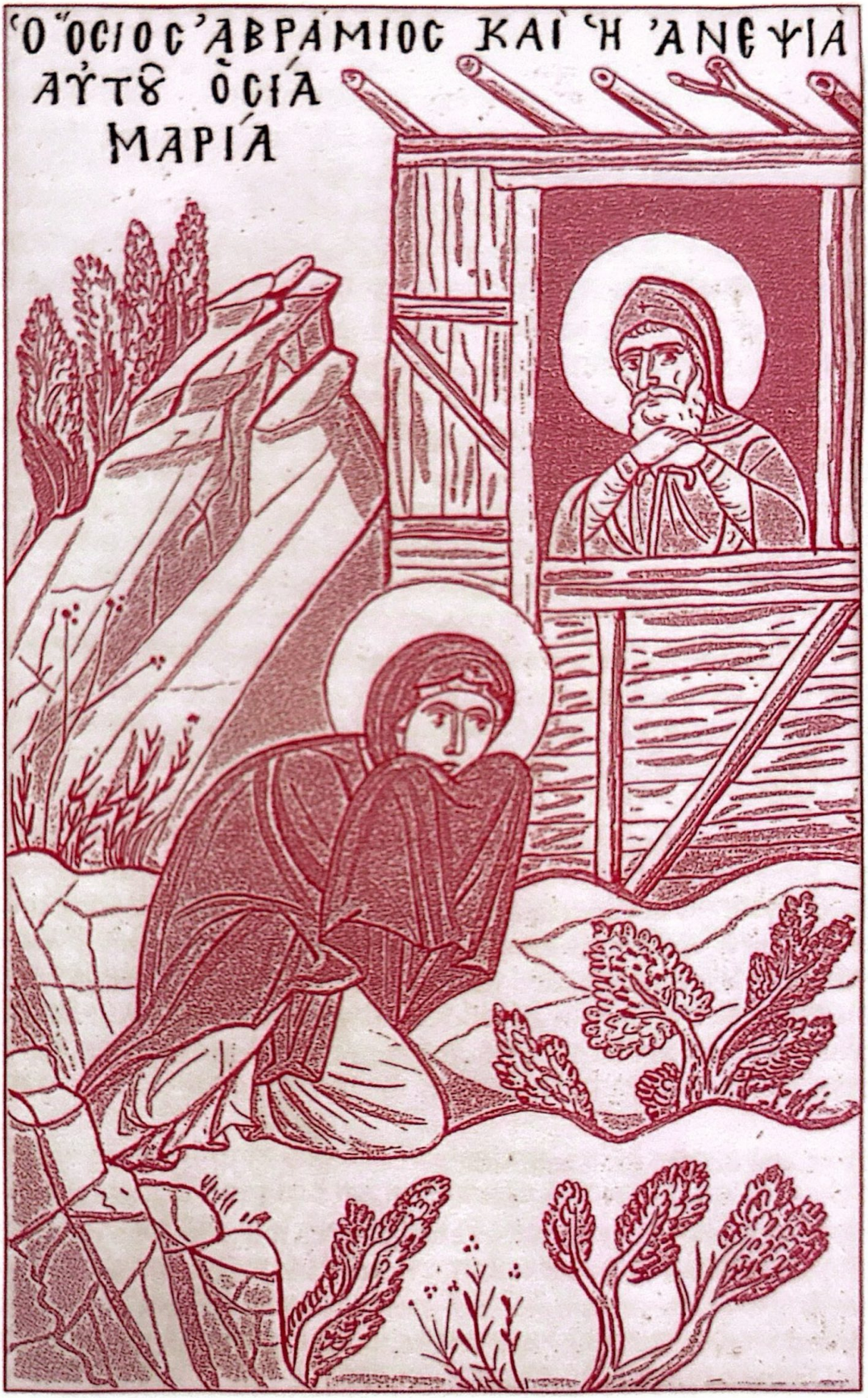
14. When the soldiers standing by saw his intrepidity in the face of death, they were astounded by the man's virtue and overcome with shame. Thus, as if their hands were tied, each looked at the other and nodded to his neighbor to perform the decapitation.

15. Since none of them could make up his mind to carry out the death sentence, and all were trying to avoid doing it, they agreed—being exceedingly amazed at the Saint's virtue—on the following course of action: each of the soldiers deposited five gold coins, and it was decided that whoever beheaded the Saint should receive them. After one of them had lent money to all who did not have it on them at the time, an avaricious soldier took the money and cut off that truly Divine and martyric head.

**B. From the Life of St. Abramios**

1. St. Abramios had a brother according to the flesh who died, leaving his only daughter, who was not more than seven years old, an orphan. Since, in the meantime, her mother had also died, her relatives assumed responsibility for her and took her to her paternal uncle, the truly Divine Abramios.

2. St. Abramios took pity on the little girl, for she was very young




*St. Abramios and his niece St. Mary*

and an orphan, and welcomed her with open arms. He provided her with a small house outside his cell and kept an eye on her by looking through a window. He educated her from Holy Scripture, showing her the way of salvation and awakening in her a yearning for spiritual contest.

3. The Blessed Abramios behaved towards the orphan girl just like an eagle, who carries his eaglet on his wings, cleaving the air together with it. By his example and by his love, he taught her to fly to the heights of virtue.

4. His niece, although rather young, nonetheless applied herself to the struggle for virtue with a zeal beyond her years. This progress caused Abramios to exult in his heart and also aroused joy in all who saw that she was prospering in virtue from such an early age.

5. But although she displayed such progress and was admired by all, when she was twenty years old she suffered a tragic fall. A certain man, who outwardly wore the *schema* of a monk, but who had a corrupt and foul mind, frequently visited the cell of the Blessed Abramios as a friend. This man looked at the young woman with lascivious eyes and induced in her a shameful desire—I know not how—to have intercourse with him.

6. Then she, compelled by this lustful desire, slipped out through a window and sinned with that disreputable monk. Immediately after committing this sin, she was smitten with severe pangs of conscience.

7. Because of this intense remorse, she was overcome by guilt at what she had dared to do and fell into despair. Thus, she lamented and cried out: "Woe is me, the wretch, woe is me, the hapless one, for I have polluted the temple of God. Alas for me, the most miserable of all women, for I have broken my promises to God and forfeited all of my previous ascesis in exchange for the bitter pleasure of a single moment.

8. "With what eyes am I to look up to Heaven, now that I have blinded them with licentious sights? How am I to move my lips in prayer, having befouled them with sordid words and kisses? With what boldness shall I go to that window and converse with my uncle, since I have violated his commandments? Oh, sinful, depraved, and disgusting

I am, who have sullied both my body and my soul!

9. "Alas! What is to become of me? Whither shall I turn? Why do I keep on living? Would that I had died before being overcome by lust; then I would have had bodily purity as a gift for death. But now, what fountains of tears will be able to wash me clean of such disgraceful filth?"

10. While she bemoaned her misfortune with such bitter words, the Evil One seized her, exploiting her boundless grief, and cast her headlong into despair. Losing all hope of salvation, she ran away to the city of Aïson [or Ason; see *Patrologia Graeca,* Vol. CXV, col. 68A—*Trans.*], which was two days' journey from the desert. There, she took up residence in an inn, discarded her monastic garb, donned secular apparel, and offered herself in prostitution to all who desired carnal pleasure.

11. In the meantime, while these things were happening to the young woman, the Saint had applied himself to ascetical silence and solitude inside his cell, and for this reason he had perceived nothing. But in a moment of brief rest, he had the following terrifying dream. It seemed to him that a mighty and fearsome serpent was glaring at him; it had suddenly emerged from its lair and entered his cell, where it swallowed a dove that lived there. It then went back to hide in its lair.

12. The Saint immediately awoke from this dream and his soul was overcome by grief and confusion. Being unable to explain the dream, he besought God to reveal to him clearly the meaning of this terrifying nocturnal vision.

13. The following night, he had another dream. It seemed to him that he once again beheld that serpent emerging from where it had been lurking before. It crawled up to him, placed its head under his feet, and immediately burst asunder, whereupon the dove that it had previously swallowed flew out from its belly, completely pure and as white as snow.

14. After seeing these things, St. Abramios concluded that the dreams were disclosing to him the spiritual fall of his niece. Filled with confusion and distress, he at once peered out from his window and began to cry out: "My Mary, my Mary, what has caused you to become

so negligent that for the last two days you have not opened your mouth to sing God's praises, or come up to my window to ask for spiritual instruction, which for you was once sweeter than honey?"

15. These and other similar words did the Saint address to his niece, without hearing any response from her. (How, in any case, could he hear, since she was preoccupied at the inn with moral depravity?) He then understood more clearly that the dream that he had was a clue to the tremendous moral fall to which Mary had succumbed.

16. He felt pain of heart at this realization, and from deep within he emitted a sigh, like smoke from the inner flame that was consuming him. With fervent prayer and tears, he besought God that Mary would recover from her sin and return to her erstwhile state of spiritual purity and moral nobility. For two whole years, he ardently entreated God for his wayward niece; indeed, the twofold unfolding of the dream revealed that Mary would remain in her fallen state for two years.

17. Towards the end of the second year, one of the Saint's friends, whom he had sent in search of Mary, returned to him. This friend informed him in great detail where his niece was, what her manner of life was, with whom she was residing, and everything in general that was of concern to him. Without any delay, Abramios forthwith magnanimously bade farewell to his old age, his desert ascesis, his quietude, and the monastic *schema* and its duties, and sallied forth to liberate from the Devil the soul that he held captive.

18. For the success of this undertaking, he donned a soldier's uniform, put a *solidus* in his pocket (for this constituted the whole of his assets) and, after renting a horse, quickly mounted it and took the road that led to the inn. He made haste to free his niece from the hands of the demon, just as, in Old Testament times, Abraham had hastened to free his nephew Lot from the captivity of the five kings (Genesis 14:8-16).

19. Abramios finally reached the inn where Mary dwelled, and stayed there for some time. To no avail, however, did he try to see his niece (for she had become so corrupted that she avoided looking at eyes that shone with chastity, whereas she gazed insatiably upon licentious eyes replete with depravity). Yet, he did not despair; he devised a ploy, which

in and of itself revealed his great zeal to save her, leaving no stone unturned in order to ensure the success of his endeavor.

20. That is to say, he affected the guise and mannerisms of a lover, and he who, in his virtue, came close to the immaterial Angels, created the impression that he was in search of carnal love. He therefore approached the innkeeper and said to him in a calm and subdued voice: "I hear that you have a very beautiful wench whom you hire out for a fee to all who wish to enjoy her favors. I have come here out of longing for this woman of sin."

21. When the innkeeper beheld the hoary old age of his interlocutor, he was disgusted at him and inwardly reproached him for his great wantonness and shamelessness. He said to himself: "Just look at this dirty old man; at his age he cannot control himself. Does he feel no shame?" In spite of this, however, so as not to lose the profit from hiring the girl out, he began to play up her beauty, thinking in this way to stimulate the aged lover still further and inflame him more intensely with lust for her.

22. St. Abramios then took the *solidus* out of his pocket and gave it to the innkeeper, bidding him to prepare an evening meal for him at which he was to present the girl to him. The innkeeper prepared a lavish meal and brought the girl out to the Elder. She was extravagantly dressed and strutting provocatively, as is the wont of such women. When St. Abramios saw Mary decked out as a prostitute, he was wounded in his heart and strove, through silence, to hold back his tears, lest they betray his act and cause the girl to run away.

23. However, he could not stop his tears, overcome as he was by the intense suffering of his soul. Hence, he shed floods of tears, but turned his face this way and that, brushing the tears from his cheeks. In order to avoid any suspicion on Mary's part, he began to make lecherous remarks to her, jest with her, leer at her, and, in general, did everything he could to arouse erotic feelings in her.

24. She, in her turn, gave Abramios a kiss. However, at this point, as though she sensed, in some mysterious and indeterminate way, the fragrance given off by the chaste members of the ascetic, she hereby remembered her former life and the heavenly goodness of purity. When

she pondered from what a spiritual height she had fallen, her eyes misted with warm tears, and she sighed inwardly, saying to herself: "Woe is me, the wretch! Woe is me. With what cords of sin I have bound myself? Woe is me, what am I to do now? Would that the earth could open and swallow me!"

25. The Divine Abramios, fearing lest he be sidetracked and exposed by such expressions of emotion, and lest his niece should run away again, hounded by shame and despair (and wishing to dispel any suspicion from her), pretended to be irritated by these displays and said somewhat bluntly: "My dear girl, enough of this weeping and melancholy! We did not meet together today in order to recall what we did in the past."

26. Then, with astounding spontaneity, the Saint turned to the innkeeper and said to him: "Come, my friend, bring us wine, so that the two of us might make merry this evening, for, as you can see, I have come from afar for the sake of this young lady."

27. After a sumptuous banquet had been made ready, he—who for fifty whole years had not raised his eyes to behold the face of a woman and who for the sake of asceticism had never even sated himself with water and dry bread—now consorted with a harlot, drinking wine and eating meat with her.

28. In this act of condescension, the Saint had as his Teacher the Blessed Paul, who, although he purified himself* and shaved his hair (Acts 21:17-26) and consented that Timothy should be circumcised (Acts 16:3), nonetheless did not respect the strict demands of Judaism, but sacrificed them in order to draw the souls of unbelievers to true piety. Looking to his example, Abramios became an emulator of his zeal and compassionate love for others.

29. After they had dined well, taking each other by the hand, they entered an inner room, in which there was a luxurious bed. When Abramios had sat down on it, the girl said to him: "Let me take off your shoes." "First shut the door securely and bolt it," the Divine Abramios bade her.

30. After making sure that the door was shut fast, Mary threw her-

self into his arms. When Abramios saw that Mary was no longer able to escape, he cast off the guise of a lover and revealed himself as he was in reality. He removed the jewels from Mary's head, sighed deeply, and said to her with sadness:

31. "My dearest Mary, do you not know who I am? Do you not recognize your kinsman? What has happened to you, dear heart? Who was it that lured you into perdition? Where now is that Angelic *schema* of virginity? Where is the crucified life? Where are the tears of compunction? How were you flung down from the height of virtue to the lowest pit of deception?

32. "Why did you not make known to me in a timely manner the warfare with which the Enemy was tempting you? Why did you not immediately reveal to me that lamentable fall? Had you done so, you would have triumphed over your sin by repentance. My friend Ephraim** and I would have implored God with fervent tears for your salvation.

33. "Why did you put such distance between us? Why did you allow yourself to fall so prey to despair, which is the Devil's most effective bait? Do you not bemoan yourself at all, but so shamelessly dare to perform the vilest acts? You should immediately raise yourself from this pit of degradation and exhibit great repentance for your audacity.

34. "Do you not know how much compassion God has for us and that He cares for us more than our own fathers? Although we spurn Him, He nonetheless desires to gather us to Himself, 'as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings' (St. Luke 13:34).

35. "For this reason, therefore, I beseech you, take once more the path that leads to perfection. Yea, my child, I adjure you by my old age. Yea, my child, take pity on the unbearable pangs and sorrows of my soul, which I have suffered for you and which I continue to suffer. Return to your former path of virtue. Yea, my child, grant me a little respite and do not send me in sorrow, in my old age, to Hades."

36. Such were the words that Abramios said to Mary; but it seemed as though he had been talking to one deaf and insensible. Out of great shame, Mary bowed her head and refrained from speaking. She just

stood there, looking at the ground, while her face changed from one color to another, owing to the confusion she felt in her soul.

37. Then Abramios, in order to help her recover from her confusion, said to her gently: "Why do you not respond, my child? Do you not realize that I undertook such a long journey for your sake? Do you not understand that I put on this entire act—the soldier's garb, the flirting, and eating meat—for your salvation? All of this has been done by him who, as you are aware, knows nothing other than the silence of his cell!

38. "There is no human sin that precludes Divine forgiveness. No wound of the soul is incurable, for the good fire of repentance cures everything. Let your sin be upon me. I will give account to Christ for what you have done. Only come with me, and let us return once more to our dwelling-place in the desert."

39. In response to all of this, the girl became extremely contrite, and she fell at the feet of her Teacher and uncle, like the harlot in the Gospel (St. Luke 7:37-50), lamenting bitterly and drenching his feet with rivers of tears.

40. Hence, the course of things resulted in Mary's wondrous conversion and the triumph of repentance. Even so, St. Abramios continued to urge her to return with him to the mountain as soon as possible. She then asked him what she should do with the clothing, the gold, and the silk bedding that she had, for she indeed possessed many valuable items. "Leave all of these things behind and follow me," the Divine Abramios instructed her, "and let us fulfill the Lord's commandment.*** Let us strive to follow Him alone, so that we might find the true wealth of the life to come."

41. The Divine Abramios took her, led her secretly out of the inn, and set her on his horse, which he led on foot, pulling it by its bridle.

42. When they reached the mountain, the Saint took the outer cell for himself and provided Mary with the inner cell. Shut up by her own will in this inner cell, without ever emerging from it, Mary thenceforth applied herself to obliterating the stains of sin from her soul through fasting, prayers, and tears.

43. Such vigilance and such strenuous effort on Mary's part were imperative, because she had only just awakened from the stupor of bodily passions. She constantly kept turning over memories of these in her mind, and they bitterly tormented her conscience, even though God often showed her that He had forgiven her all of the sins that she had committed by adorning her with the gift of working miracles. Observing all of this, St. Abramios rejoiced in his heart and gave ardent thanks to God.

44. After attaining to a ripe old age, St. Abramios departed this life and went to the heavenly abodes. His niece reposed five years after his death. As she lay dead, her face bloomed forth with the most delightful grace and shone with radiance—an unerring sign of the inward splendor of a soul illumined by repentance and virtue.

**C. From the Life of St. John the Theologian**

1. On one occasion, after returning from Patmos, the great John went to a neighboring city, where he consoled the brethren in no small measure by his teaching and his love. There, he found a young man of normal stature, who had a handsome face. Through the clairvoyant energy of the Holy Spirit, St. John realized that this young man had a noble soul and had not suffered any moral falls. He thus blessed him and with paternal exhortations aroused him to zeal for virtue.

2. When the Divine John was about to travel to other regions to preach the word of salvation, he entrusted the young man to the Bishop of the city. In front of the Church and with Christ as a witness, he gave the Bishop detailed instructions and guidance regarding the Christian education and conduct of the young man.

3. The Bishop listened eagerly to the Apostle's recommendations and promised to look after the young man. Thereupon, the great John left for Ephesus and the Bishop took the young man into his own home. He brought him up and educated him in the Christian Faith, looked after him in general, and finally baptized him. After sealing him with the seal of the Lord (that is, with Holy Baptism), the Bishop showed him how to safeguard himself from every danger and released him from his tutelage.

4. However, the young man obtained his freedom prematurely, before his soul had been firmly grounded in the Faith. For this reason, some other young men of his age, undisciplined and depraved, succeeded in approaching him and enticing him into debauchery, through lavish banquets and drinking bouts. And what was the result of this? Unfortunately, the path of vice is very much downhill, and he who first sets foot on it will easily reach the final stage, at which point everything in his environment facilitates his degeneration.

5. Such a thing happened to this young man, who was associating with depraved and dissolute friends. Thus, one night, while on their way to commit brigandage, they took the young man along with them. A desire for robbery having already been stirred up within him, the young fellow whetted his impulse towards it by the hope of pecuniary gain. In fact, he had become so blinded by the intensity of this passion that he no longer looked at life in a Christian way at all. Without a moment's hesitation, he formed a band of robbers, together with his friends, and proved to be their ringleader, since he was the most competent among them.

6. After a short time, the great John returned to the city, having put the affairs of the Church in order during his travels. He immediately summoned the Bishop and said to him: "Give me now that treasure which Christ and I entrusted to you; the Church herself is a witness of what I deposited with you."

7. When he heard these words, the Bishop was dumbstruck, because he thought that the great John was asking for money, which he did not remember having received. It was not easy for him to believe this, since he had not received any money, but neither could he disbelieve the words of the Divine John.

8. When St. John saw the Bishop's perplexity, he wisely said to him: "I am asking for the young man whom I entrusted to you—for the soul of our brother." The elderly Bishop emitted a deep groan and his eyes misted. "The young man has died," he replied. "When did he die? In what way? Did he die as a believer, commending his soul to God?" To these questions from John the Bishop responded with emotion: "He has chosen to become a brigand and to dwell on the mountain, rather than to be faithful to the Church. He prefers to live among malefactors and

robbers than to stay close to us and enjoy our care and attention. This is the kind of death that I am talking about."

9. When the great John heard this, he was deeply distressed and overcome by fatherly feelings. After a few moments' silence, he said sorrowfully to the Bishop: "A fine guardian of a brother's soul did I leave behind me! But bring me a horse, and let someone who knows the road to the mountain come with me." Within a short time, he mounted a horse, took the reins in his hand, and goaded the horse to run swiftly, although he complained that the speed of the horse was nothing in comparison to his eagerness to reach the brigands' hideout.

10. After a considerable journey, he encountered the brigands' outpost, neither aiming to avoid it nor fleeing from their ferocity. They seized him on the spot. But St. John said calmly to them:

"I came to your den precisely so that you might seize me. Now I want you to take me to your leader." As the robbers conducted the Saint to their chieftain, the latter realized that the prisoner was St. John, and he fled in shame. But the great John, forgetting his age and his dignity, ran in pursuit of him.

11. As soon as he caught up with the young man, St. John cried out in a loud and sorrowful voice: "My son, why are you fleeing from your father? Have regard for my old age; take pity on the flower of your youth, for you still have hopes of living a spiritual life. I will give account for you. Stay where you are, my son. Christ has sent me to you."

12. When he heard these words, the young man first stopped in his tracks and stared vacantly down at the ground, unable, out of shame, to raise his eyes. Then he threw his weapons to the ground and began to wail in a piteous and heartrending manner. He went up to the Elder and embraced him. Who, at that moment, would not have felt pity for a young man who wept fervently and sighed with such contrition and sorrow?

13. The great John, as a true father, full of love and compassion, assured the young man of God's forgiveness and promised him that, as long as he repented, the Heavenly Judge would be sympathetic to him and would not condemn him. Having softened his soul with these words, he took him by the hand, kissed him tenderly, and led him back

to the Church.

14. Thereafter, with intense prayer and fasting, St. John besought God's help for the salvation of the young man's soul. At the same time, through various instructive words and counsels, he pacified and healed the youth's soul. The great John did not leave that city until he had completely restored the young man to his original state of spiritual health. Thus, he departed, leaving that young man as an example of repentance and himself as an example of love and compassion.

**D. From St. Ephraim**

1. Those who ply the blacksmith's trade are not deterred therefrom by the dust and ashes, by the beating of the hammer, by the toil, or by the heat of the furnace, but after taking a lump of copper or iron, they diligently and persistently fashion it into utensils.

2. As for us, let us not be fainthearted, but let us patiently and persistently teach, admonish, exhort, chide, and reprove those under us, displaying all zeal and diligence, so that, with God's help, we might be able to make an unworthy person into a precious vessel and, thereby, be vouchsafed preternatural glory.

3. To those who struggle in this way God has made a promise, saying: "[I]f thou wilt bring forth the precious from the worthless, thou shalt be as my mouth" (Jeremiah 15:19). Elsewhere, He says: "Blessed is he that hath a seed in Sion, and household friends in Jerusalem" (Isaiah 31:9).

4. You should know this, too: If you were never subject to a Superior, as one should be, then you must without complaint bear with the weaknesses of a novice, so that, through this effort, you might make up for the labors that you missed in the past, having never been subject to any testing as a novice.

5. Let us not forget what the Apostle Paul says: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification" (Romans 15:1-2).

**E. From the *Gerontikon***

1. There was an Elder who had a disciple, and this brother was beset by thoughts of fornication. The Elder pleaded with him, saying: "Be patient, my son, for this warfare is from the Enemy, and it will pass." But the disciple replied: "I can no longer endure it, Abba; I must fulfill my desire."

2. When the Elder saw that his disciple would not give way, he pretended that he himself was beset by similar thoughts and said to the disciple: "I, too, am undergoing such warfare, my son. So, let us go together and fulfill our desire, and afterwards we will return to our cell." The Elder had one *solidus*, which he took with him.

3. When they came to the place of sin, the Elder said to his disciple: "Stay outside and let me go in first, and then you can enter." The Elder went in and said to the harlot, offering her the money: "Please do not defile the brother who will now enter your room." She promised the Elder that she would not defile his disciple. The Elder then emerged and told the brother to go inside.

4. As soon as the disciple entered her room, the harlot said to him: "Wait, brother. Although I am a sinful woman, we do have a rule that the two of us must first fulfill." So she bade him stand in a corner of the room and make fifty prostrations, while she stood in another corner doing likewise.

5. After they had begun to make their prostrations, each in his own corner, and had reached thirty, the brother was overcome with compunction and said to himself: "How can I pray to God while I am preparing to commit such a foul act?" He immediately left the room without being defiled.

6. When God saw the good intention and effort of the Elder, He took the carnal warfare away from the brother, and they both returned to their cell, glorifying God.

7. An Elder said: "Our spiritual Fathers had the custom of going to the cells of inexperienced brothers, who wished to practice asceticism on their own, in order to look in on them. They did this out of fear, lest one of them should be tempted by demons and his mind suffer harm.

8. "If they found that a brother had suffered any such harm, they would take him to the Church, where a basin was set up and prayer was offered for the one undergoing temptations. All of the brothers would wash their hands in the basin and, after all had washed, would pour the water onto the brother who was being tempted. He would at once be cleansed of his thoughts."

9. Abba Mios related the following about a certain Elder who lived in Sketis, who had formerly been a slave and who had great discernment. Every year he would go to Alexandria to give his masters the amount he owed for his manumission. His masters would receive him with respect and make a prostration to him. The Elder would then pour water into a basin and take it to wash his masters' feet.

10. Out of respect for him, his masters would react against his act of abasement and say to him: "Do not burden our consciences, Father." The Elder would answer: "I acknowledge that I am your slave and I thank you for letting me go free to serve God. As a token of my acknowledgment, I am washing your feet. Please accept this as my payment." His masters would object and refuse to accept this expression of humility.

11. The Elder, in turn, would tell them firmly: "If you do not accept this service of mine, I will remain your slave for the rest of my life." Fearing this threat, the Elder's former masters would let him fulfill his desire and escort him with great honor, as he left, offering him many goods, so that he could give alms for their salvation. On account of his conduct he became renowned and beloved.

### F. From St. Ephraim

When a shepherd sleeps far away from the sheepfold, he causes no small harm to himself; for a shepherd asleep is the joy of the wolves.

* Purification: a religious ritual observed by Jews for purification from sins and sanctification (through aspersion or washing).

** St. Ephraim, it should be noted, knew St. Mary personally and composed a beautiful Life of Sts. Abramios and Mary. This Life can be found in the Greek work, *Ὁσίου Ἐφραὶμ τοῦ Σύρου Ἔργα*, ed. Konstantinos G. Frantzolas (Thessalonica: Ekdoseis "To Periboli tes Panagias," 1998), Vol. VII, pp. 356-394. It is beautifully written in the traditional style of such works, of course, but has a particularly striking literary quality to it—*Trans.*

*** "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and

thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (St. Matthew 19:21).

## Hypothesis XLI

*Those who have received the gift from God to teach, to the extent that they take care to increase the circles of those whom they teach, will correspondingly enjoy greater Grace. For this reason, they should teach indefatigably. And those who listen to their teachings with indifference will be subject to insufferable chastisement. A Superior must remain in his monastery and have a second in command to attend to the brothers.*

### A. From the Life of St. Pachomios

1. Because many went to St. Pachomios to become his disciples and to take his spiritual direction, on this account, and because those coming increased daily, there was formed an immense crowd of newcomers, such that the Saint was obliged to appoint various among his disciples to help care for, and attend to, the brothers who were coming. And the Father himself, guided by the Grace of the Holy Spirit, appointed to each of them the standard and quality of life that he should observe in the monastic estate.

2. Thus, to some he gave orders to earn their staples from their handiwork, while to others he assigned the care of the brotherhood. Furthermore, he assigned a brother to the duty of steward, so that he could procure the necessary food and supplies to provide for the brothers and visitors. And he placed a person second in command; that is, someone to care diligently for the brothers in direct succession to him.

3. All of these individuals the Saint taught with perseverance, preparing them to be ready in soul for every obedience and not to exercise, in any circumstance at all, their own will, so that they might bear fruit in a Godly way and not cultivate their passions.

4. And when he was busy or absent, during this time the second in command would take up the entire administration of the monastery, without the least haughtiness or boastful pride, toiling to arrange everything with humility of mind—for the upbuilding and spiritual benefit

of the brothers—until such a time as St. Pachomios was once again with them.

**B. From the Life of St. Ephraim**

1. To St. Ephraim, God gave munificent talents in instruction, which he, with great attention, took care to increase by instilling his teachings in his disciples.

2. He himself reveals this, saying: "When I was still a child and approaching the age of adolescence, I once had the following curious dream. From within my mouth there sprouted a vine with many grapes. The height of this vine was very great, and its branches reached out across the earth. On the branches of this vine there sat the various species of birds, which were flying from branch to branch, feeding from the grapes on the vine. The more birds that the vine hosted, and the more that these birds ate the grapes therefrom, the more fruit it made, becoming filled with new grapes."

3. Now this dream, which refers to him, he saw himself. But other clairvoyant persons, who were worthy of seeing such revelatory dreams, also affirm that miracles about St. Ephraim were revealed to them. One of these persons relates the following characteristic revelation:

4. "I once saw a host of Angels who were coming down to earth from high in the heavens. They were holding in their hands a book, which appeared to have writing on both the inside and the outside. Among themselves, these holy Angels were debating about to whom, among those of prudent and pious life, they would entrust this book. In the end, they all agreed that the book should be given to Ephraim. And, indeed, this holy host of Angels entrusted the book to Ephraim."

5. When the person who saw this revelatory dream awoke, he went to the Church, filled with fear. And what did he find at that sacred place? He saw Ephraim, who was spiritually feeding all of those present with teachings that were beneficial in content and sweeter than honey in expression and verbal formulation. This actual situation provided a basis for the interpretation of his dream.

6. On the one hand, St. Ephraim fittingly gave thanks to God for the charism of revelation given to him, while, at the same time, God enriched the Saint with strength of word and with fluency; and so inundated was his mind by the treasure of lofty thoughts, that his tongue did not have time to respond to the speed of his reflections. Nonetheless, he used such a rich vocabulary that, with it, he was able to convey his thoughts in such a way as to say more—doing so in the most expressive way, moreover—in a shorter time than it would take others just to reflect.

7. And he himself felt in the confines of his soul the deluge of these Divine charisms, such that, as those who knew him tell us, he once said to God: "O Master, cease the waves of Thy Grace." He said this because from his tongue there flowed, as from an abyss, a sea of teachings which did not abate. Indeed, the organs of the spoken word could not keep pace in serving this host of thoughts, as we said. But nothing else could make him cut off his speaking, save only prayer and, concomitantly, tears.

8. Now, also in philanthropy and the support of the poor, as well as his pity for those in distress, the Saint lacked nothing—it is said—but responded as follows in his responsibility for their needs. Since, of course, he did not personally have the means to help them, as he was wholly destitute and had no possessions, he used only the following in looking after their salvation: by his wisdom, that is, and with the prudence of his tongue, he was able to move many among the rich, so that they would open up their feelings of sympathy for the poor and, thereafter, their treasuries, in order to do almsgiving. Thus, from these wealthy people he gave in abundance to those who were in need.

9. It was not just by speech that this holy man was able to change the dispositions of souls, enchanting those who heard him and moving them to show charity; he was also helped in this by his ways—by the sweetness of his expression and by his modesty. Many indeed were influenced by his very countenance, so that simply by looking on others he would elicit contrition in their souls.

10. So richly had every virtue taken root and borne fruit in the soul of St. Ephraim, that one would not be wrong to call him a wellspring of every sort of healing; a pasture strewn with flowers of every color—and

with roses; or even a second heaven over the earth, adorned with a host of stars.

11. And should one wish still more, we might say that the soul of St. Ephraim resembled Paradise, as it once flourished in Eden, being always joyous and in full bloom, never withering but ever adorned with fruit-bearing and unfading plants. This Paradise of the soul of St. Ephraim was free of those serpents which envy and which wish to thwart our salvation, and they neither approached nor entered therein.

**C. From the *Gerontikon***

1. There once lived an Elder in Sketis who, though he had toiled at physical asceticism, was not marked by diligence and care with regard to his thoughts. Once, now, this Elder went to Abba John and asked him to explain what lethe (i.e., spiritual forgetfulness) was. Having heard and been informed about the subject, the Elder returned to his cell; in the meantime, however, he forgot the teaching which Abba John had expounded.

2. So, he once again went to Abba John and asked him about the same matter. Having heard the Abba's instruction, he returned to his cell. But again, no sooner had he returned to his cell, than he forgot all that he had heard. In his persistent desire to retain what Abba John had told him, he went still another time to him, and once more returned to his cell. He did this several times, since he was always overcome by forgetfulness.

3. Some time later, the Elder happened upon Abba John by chance; and he said to him: "Do you know, Abba, that I have again forgotten what you told me? However, in order not to annoy you, I did not return."

4. In response, Abba John said to him: "Go and light an oil lamp."

The Elder went and lighted a lamp. So, Abba John told him, further: "Go and get all of the oil lamps and light them from this one lamp."

Indeed, when the Elder had fulfilled this command, Abba John asked him: "Elder, did anything happen to the first lamp, when you lighted all of the others from it?"

"No, the Elder replied."

5. Thereupon, the Abba drew for him the following conclusion: "The same thing happens, Elder, in the case at hand; even if the entire skete should come to me, they would not be able to deplete the power of the Grace of Christ. Thus, you should come to me whenever you wish, without thinking a thing of it."

Hence, the patience demonstrated by both of them—Abba John offering counsel without becoming tired of doing so, on the one hand, and the Elder approaching, on the other hand, to overcome the impediment in his soul—was pleasing to God, and lethe departed from the soul of the Elder.

6. This was precisely the work of the Fathers of Sketis: to inspire eagerness, in those who were warring with evil, to struggle one for the other in acquiring good.

**D. From St. Ephraim**

1. Do not wish to direct souls, if you have not achieved a measure of passionlessness, lest you harm yourself and your disciples. And if you undertake the direction of souls against your will, because such was the Will of God, take care not to fulfill your own will, but only the will of the person who has entrusted to you the souls of the rational sheep. For it entails great danger if one looks after those under his guidance carelessly and with negligence towards his duties.

2. As well, an Abbot must have a profound knowledge of his duties and his mission, in the way that a scientist knows his science, and must be vigilantly attentive to the salvation of his disciples. He must know well, and perceive with exactitude and in detail, the state of soul of each one of them (from his every step, his movements, and the way in which he dresses), taking care that he does not look at inappropriate things and, in general, guiding his disciple, as one would guide a blind man, by the hand towards what is more perfect. Finally, he must show to each of the brothers all that contributes to the salvation of his soul, down to the very last detail.

3. The indolent he must incite to spiritual labor, reminding them of the chastisements that have been established by the Church Fathers against those who break their commitments, to the end that such may be used as a wall to protect them against the attacks of the Enemy caus-

ed by their lethargy. When the Abbot acts in this way, then the wolves, seeing the watchful care of the shepherd, will flee far from the flock of the rational sheep.

4. To be sure, nothing more certainly guides the soul towards the path of salvation, and nothing makes it more vigorous and stronger in its labors of asceticism and virtue, than to find a Teacher who instructs others in virtue by his deeds and his words and who preaches good by what he practices, in concord with the saying, "Look on me and do likewise" (Judges 7:17).

**E. From Abba Isaiah**

1. St. Isaiah said to his disciples: "My brothers, do not be neglectful to keep and to apply the commandments which I give you, for—though I ask forgiveness for what I am going to say—I will not otherwise allow you to remain with me.

2. "If you keep my commandments, in private and in public, I will then speak on your behalf before God. If, however, you do not keep my commandments, then God will call you to account for your heedlessness and to explain why you violated my commandments.

3. "Anyone who, in the end, keeps and applies my commandments, in private and in public, such a one our Master, God, will keep from every evil and will protect against all demonic temptations that attack him, whether in a secret or in an open way."

4. The same Abba Isaiah said: "If there are brothers dwelling with you, look after them with strictness, so that they will apply your directions; for you will give an accounting before God for them."

**F. From Abba Mark**

1. He who teaches in a correct manner has a duty to apply to himself that which he teaches to others, as though he had received an order directly from God. For when truth is preached, it is not inspired or acquired by the one who speaks, but comes directly from God, Who acts through the means of him who speaks.

2. If you have been appointed to direct brothers, heed your responsibility and do not be silent in the face of those who obstinately resist your counsels; rather, incite them to what is proper.

3. Keep in mind that, in all things in which the brothers show you obedience, you will have the reward for the work of virtue that they realize through your word. And in all that, at the same time, in which they do disobedience, do not be disquieted; always forgive them for their disobedience and you will receive your reward for your spiritual efforts from Him Who said: "For if you forgive with your whole heart those persons who have saddened you by their acts, then your heavenly Father will also forgive your own sins! But if you do not forgive those who have harmed you, then neither will your Father forgive you your own sins" (see St. Matthew 6:14-15).

## Hypothesis XLII

*No one should teach or test those who are not in submission to him, even if they should be sinning, unless they should request such; nor should one even come to their defense, if they are wronged.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Paisios and his brothers came to such blows with one another, that blood was flowing from their heads. Abba Poimen was staying with them at the time, but he said not even a word to them during the entire time that they were fighting.

2. In the meantime, Abba Anoub came in and, on seeing the brothers, said to Abba Poimen: "My goodness, how did you allow the brothers to attack one another, without uttering a word?"

"They are brothers, and they will once again come to love one another," the Elder said.

"Look how they have been bloodied all over, and yet you still say that they will become friends again?" Abba Anoub replied.

3. Abba Poimen, revealing the reason for his silence, said: "Let me assure you that I was not here."

In fact, the Elder had turned his mind and his heart towards God, and he did not even perceive what was taking place. This was because the combatants were not his disciples.

4. Amma Sarah once sent the following message to Abba Paphnoutios: "Do you think that one is doing the work of God if he lets a brother be dishonored?"

Abba Paphnoutios replied, "Since it is precisely the work of God which I desire to do, I have no dealings with anyone."

5. An Elder was asked: "Is it a good thing for me to set out to resolve the differences between two brothers?"

"It is good," the Elder replied, "to flee from such situations. In this regard, it is written that a righteous man 'stoppeth his ears from hear-

ing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil' (Isaiah 33:15)."

6. Abba Arsenios says that a monk should never be an intermediary in a dispute in a place other than his own, and thus he will find peace.

7. Once Abba Makarios visited Abba Anthony. Having conversed with him, he returned to his skete. When the Fathers learned about the return of Abba Makarios, they went to visit him. At one point in their conversation, Abba Makarios said to them: "I told Abba Anthony, 'I cannot make an offering in your place.'"*

8. The Fathers, as though they had not heard him, began discussing other issues and did not even ask what Abba Anthony had said back to Abba Makarios. But neither did Abba Makarios tell them what response Abba Anthony had given him.

9. About such incidents, one of the Fathers says the following: "When the Fathers see that something escapes the attention of the brothers and the latter do not ask about it, of what benefit is it to force them to begin discussing the matter in question? If a Father has determined that there is a lack of interest in a matter by the brothers, and has not been urged by them to say anything else about it, he falls silent, so as not to speak without being asked and thereby fall to vain babble."

10. A brother asked an Elder: "If I am living together with other brothers and I see something inappropriate, am I to say something?"

The Elder replied: "If they are older than you, or of the same age as you, it is better to remain silent, for you will be at rest. In such a circumstance, consider yourself younger than they and remain heedless."

11. The brother asked once again: "But what am I to do, Father, when they annoy me with their behavior?"

To this second question, the Elder replied: "If you suffer on account of the way that they are behaving, make this known only once, and with the greatest humility. If they do not listen to you, then cut off your will and leave your effort in God's hands.

12. "Be careful not to externalize your inner upset, but make sure that your concern is harmonious with the Will of God. Anyway, as I see it, silence is the better thing."

**B. From Abba Isaiah**

1. My brothers, if you go out to do some secondary work,** each of you should look after himself and not look at how his brother is working. Do not undertake to instruct him or to disagree with him, but let him do his work, laboring as he wishes.

2. However, if a brother should say, "My brothers, please have the kindness to teach me how to be more diligent in my work—since I do not know this art well—and to find someone among you who knows this art well," do not be wily and say that you do not know the art. For such is not humility according to God. Nor does one who, when asked to help a brother but does not desire to do so, have the love of God. Rather, he is possessed by evil; and it is written, "For evildoers shall be destroyed" (Psalm 36:9).

3. If you move to a place to dwell, whether alone or with others, and there are those who have been living in that place before you arrived, and you see some endeavor or work that occasions damage, or is harmful, or is unmonastic, do not open your mouth or offer criticism. Rather, if this disquiets you, go to another place and guard your tongue, so as not to criticize these former monks for what they do. Such criticism will be deadly for you.

**C. From St. Mark**

1. Do not criticize in person those who make a mistake but are not under your direction. Such criticism is the product of authority and is not counsel.

2. That which is said (in the form of statements or directions) generally and impersonally brings benefit to all, for to each it reveals his own personal circumstances, which are known only to him.

3. Do not contest about the truth with those who have not submitted themselves to your guidance and who themselves contest the truth, so as not to invite useless hatred, as the Holy Scriptures say.***

* That is, "δὲν ἔχω προσφορὰν εἰς τὸν τόπον σας," or "I cannot Liturgize." In other places, this is rendered, "since I do not make offerings in this place." By this phrase, the Saint, who was a Priest, apparently meant the lack of certain provisions for the cele-

bration of the Liturgy.

** The Fathers considered secondary work, or "incidental work," all that with which one is occupied beyond one's essential spiritual duties; that is, in general, prayer, study, and silence.

*** The following is stated in Holy Scripture: "Do not rebuke evil men, lest they hate thee" (Proverbs 9:8) and "Hatred stirreth up strife; but love covereth all sins" (Proverbs 10:12).

## Hypothesis XLIII

*We should not conduct ourselves autocratically towards our disciples or assign to them work that is inapposite. All that is assigned with humility of mind and with a clean conscience the Grace of God will bring to an auspicious end.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. If, with fear of God and humility, one commands a brother to complete some task, then his words, coming from God, demand of the brother that he eagerly do obedience and fulfill the command.

2. If, however, someone, lacking fear of God, wishes to command authority over a brother, then God, Who knows the secret dispositions of the heart, will not, by His Grace, inform the brother being commanded to be eager in performing what he is commanded to do.

3. Because every single thing that comes about by way of the fear of God is made manifest—such as one who is afflicted by an autocratic spirit. That which comes forth from an autocratic command is replete with anger, occasions upset, and, as a result of this, manifests itself as something inspired by the Evil One.

4. A brother was upset by another brother; so, when the latter was informed of this, he went to the brother to ask forgiveness. However, the brother would not open his door to him.

5. Immediately, therefore, the offending brother went to an Elder and explained the situation.

The Elder answered him: "Take heed: maybe you are of the opinion that this brother, who did not open his door to you, was the source of the scandal, thereby reproaching him and justifying yourself. For this reason God may not have inspired him to open the door to you. Therefore, do what I tell you, even if he should spit on you. Go again to the brother, firmly hold in your heart the idea that *you* have sinned against *him*, and justify your brother with all sincerity for his stand. If you do this, then

be sure that God will inform him and that you will be reconciled to him."

6. Indeed, the brother, persuaded by the counsels of the Elder, did just as he had been directed. After a few days, he once again went to see the brother, who was himself regretful, and knocked on the door of his cell. As soon as the other brother saw that he had arrived, he joyfully opened his door, even before his visitor had finished knocking, first doing a prostration to him and then embracing him from the depth of his soul; and thus there came between them concord and sincere peace.

7. An Elder said: "Do not despise those who reside with you, for you do not know whether the Spirit of God takes rest in you or in them. And he who resides with you is he who serves you."

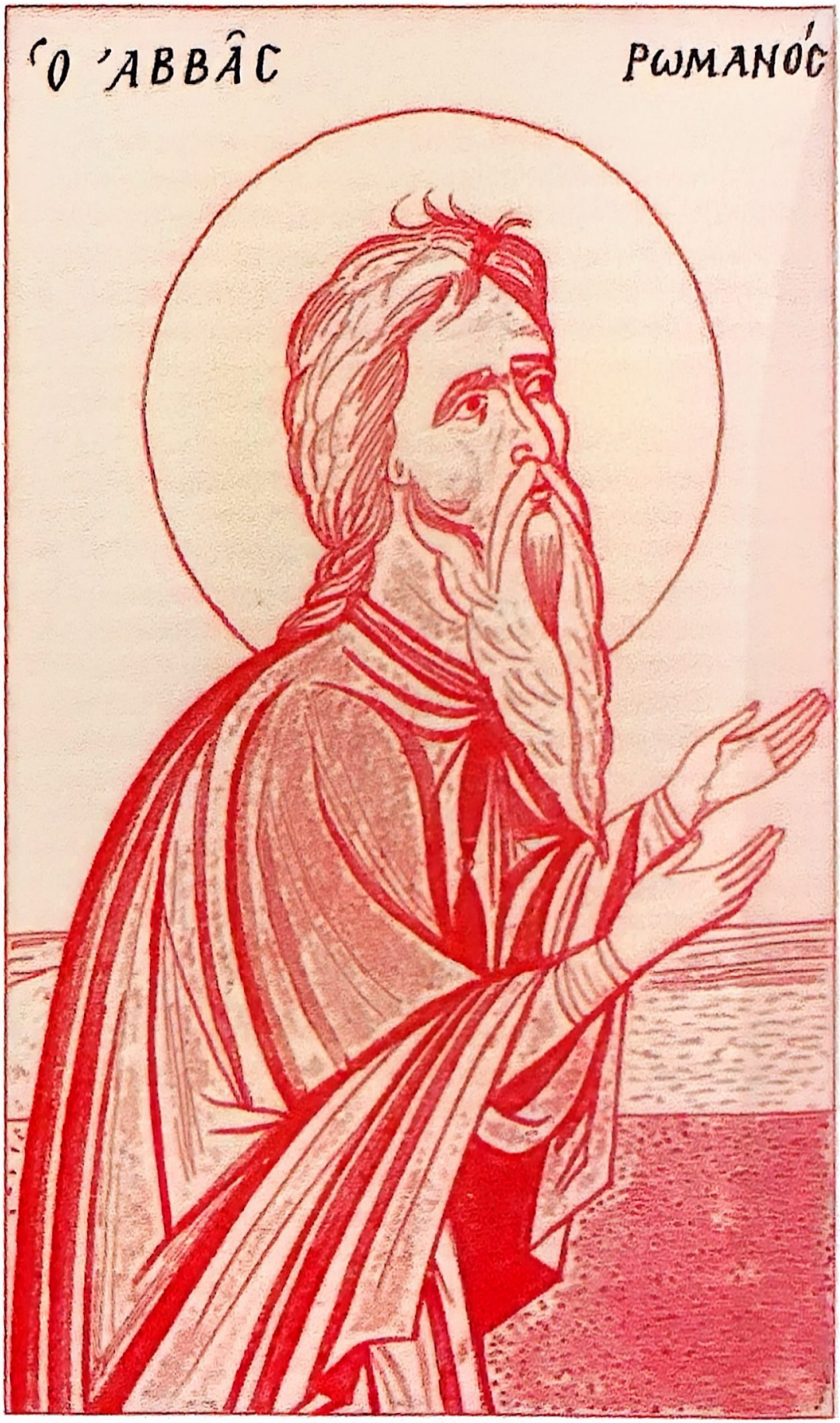
8. When Abbot Romanos had arrived at the last moments of his life, shortly before departing for the Lord, his disciples gathered around him and with reverence asked him: "How are we to offer direction?"

He answered them: "I cannot remember ever having told anyone to do something, before having resolved in my mind not to become angry, in case what I asked was not done. By this tactic, I was able to live peaceably with everyone at all times."

**B. From St. Ephraim**

1. My brother, has God entrusted some soul to your direction? Gird your waist, as though you were someone preparing for work or to do battle, for there is opening before you a serious struggle, and not a small one. Be vigilant, therefore, for such a thing demands much care; and do not show contemptuous indifference. Let the communication between you and your disciple take place in all holiness, lest the Enemy, by virtue of your lack of attentiveness, should sow secretly some seed of his malevolence by way of indecent proposals in the guise of obedience.

2. For he who goes beyond the boundaries of purity and prudence, and requires of his disciple obedience for the sake of some bodily pleasure, such a person brings upon himself fearful and dreadful damnation, in my opinion—and no less a condemnation than that assigned to those who crucified Christ, since such a person has dared to defile the House of God, which is sanctified, and him whom the Holy Spirit entrusted to




*Abba Romanos*

him.

3. In this respect, the Apostle Paul says: "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy" (I Corinthians 3:17). But the disciple who obeys in such circumstances will *himself* not go unpunished by God. For why did he not imitate the wise Joseph, or try to apply with zeal the example of the blessed So[u]sanna?

4. As we know, Joseph, on the one hand, even though he had been sold into slavery, nevertheless did not succumb to the wiles of his mistress, or even her threats to kill him. This fearful Egyptian woman would at one time flatter the young Joseph, promising to give him many gifts if he would sin with her, and, at other times, when he did not submit, would threaten him with torments and death.

5. Despite all of this, Joseph considered nothing to be better than modesty, and would rather have died than to fall to an indecent act (Genesis 39:1-20), which for her of whom we speak was nothing at all. And while he was obedient to his master and mistress in all things, nonetheless in this he would not obey, out of reverence for, and fear of, God—"leaving us an example" (I St. Peter 2:21). The blessed Sosanna did likewise, preferring death rather than to sin before God.*

6. For this reason, my brothers, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12), since the Enemy wars violently and madly against those who try to apply the virtues, using every means to entrap them by evil. If, however, we watch over ourselves and are motivated by the fear of God, we shall easily crush the Devil.

7. Those who are older should be standards and examples for the younger in every virtue, thus not giving occasion to those who seek grounds for scandal; for the Lord also says: "Whoever shall first struggle to teach and keep the commandments of God, and who will teach by his example, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven" (see St. Matthew 5:19).

8. Therefore, the Divine Apostle commands: "[B]e thou an example of the believers" (I St. Timothy 4:12). Take note, as well, of the other commandments of the Apostle, which apply in the present instance: "[L]et one that ruleth be distinguished by his diligent care and eagerness" (see

Romans 12:8) and "Let no man despise thy youth" (I St. Timothy 4:12).

9. Take care, lest you use the ministry of teaching in a hateful way. Behold what the Apostle says in this instance: "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock; and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory" (I St. Peter 5:3-4).

10. And the Apostle commands, saying: "Be followers of me, even as I am also of Christ" (I Corinthians 11:1). Let us strive to overcome pride, for it is foreign and is enmity towards the faithful, in keeping with what is written: "Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly" (Proverbs 3:34; see also St. James 4:6 and I St. Peter 5:5).

11. My brother: Have you been appointed an Abbot? Take care not to become proud. Before the brothers, with simplicity and humility, be as one of them. Keep in mind your former labors—that is, those to which you were assigned as a novice—and remember that these brothers are now at that stage of submission in which you were before. Therefore, be not heedless regarding their salvation, but look after them with motherly affection.

12. He who is caring for his brothers and imparts modesty to them by instruction and the Lord's admonitions will be honorable and pleasing before God. He who nourishes in them sincere feelings of compassion for his neighbor, him will the Lord surround with His infinite mercy. For the acts of mercy which a man carries out remain upon him as a seal.

13. When one is not ruling over someone, he may appear as gentle and sympathetic towards others. However, when he is assigned the power to be a leader and to command, he then uses this authority without discretion, imposing on others things that are difficult to endure. If, however, his power is in the meantime taken away, and he is himself assigned to do what he has commanded others to do, he will find that he cannot endure or fulfill what is commanded of him. Only then can he see his weakness and illness, of which, being unwise, he was earlier ignorant, since his sense of authority had darkened his mind.

**C. From Abba Mark**

1. An Abbot is obliged to tell his disciple what is beneficial for him to do; when, however, the disciple disobeys, then he must be told in advance of the evil that will follow upon his disobedience. If, by Divine Providence, you have assumed the ministry of instruction in the Lord, and others do not hear you, grieve only mentally, without showing your upset externally. For if you grieve only internally, and do not show it, you will not be judged by God along with those who disobey. However, when you show upset, then God will allow you to be beset, along with the disobedient, by temptation.

2. He who, with fear of God, admonishes and corrects one who sins, the same cultivates in the realm of his soul that which is antithetical to sin: virtue. He, however, who scorns one who sins, and wishes him ill and derides him, such a person, in concord with spiritual law, will himself fall to the same passion: "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged" (St. Matthew 7:2).

3. He who does not attend to your recommendations from the very first word, do not compel him to carry out what you have proposed to him by entering into a disputatious war of words with him; rather, take care to reap gain from that which he rejected; for you will benefit more from your forgiveness than from his correction.

4. St. Makarios said: "If you reprimand someone and your soul begins to move towards anger at him, you have already fallen *to that other passion* of anger. It is not good to save others and yet cause harm to your own soul."

* The story of So[u]sanna is related in the Book of Daniel: in some editions, before the first chapter, while in others, as the thirteenth chapter.

## Hypothesis XLIV

*We should not criticize someone who does some good thing, even if it is perhaps imperfect; on the contrary, we should reinforce his good intention and incite him, bit by bit, to perfection.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. There once came a brother to Abba Poimen. He said to him: "I plant my fields, and from the harvest I offer others charity. Am I doing well in this?"

"You do well," answered the Elder.

After this reply, the brother departed happily, and he was ready to increase his efforts, so as to show greater charity.

2. In the meantime, Abba Anoub having been informed about the advice which Abba Poimen had given to this brother, said to Abba Poimen: "Do you not fear God, in giving such advice to the brother?"

The Elder listened but did not speak.

3. After two days, Abba Poimen sent for the brother and summoned him before him; present, as well, was Abba Anoub. He said to the brother: "What did you tell me yesterday? I do not remember. My mind was elsewhere."

"I told you," the brother replied, "that I plant my fields and that from what I reap I show charity."

"I thought," the Elder said, "you were speaking of your brother, the layman. If, however, it is you who are doing this, you should know that this is not consistent with your monastic function."

4. The brother, on hearing this, became sad and said: "I know of no other work than this, and I cannot cease planting my field."

Having said this, the brother left, crestfallen.

After seeing this, Abba Anoub did a prostration before Abba Poimen, saying to him: "Forgive me."

5. The Elder forgave him and said: "I, too, surely knew from the out-

set that to occupy oneself with seeding fields was not a monastic task; however, I spoke with him in view of his desire to do charity and to work for the love of his brothers. But now he left in sadness, still to do the very same thing."

6. An Elder said: "I have always disdained the vanity of the young, who, though they work, enjoy no reward, since they seek the glory of men."

7. However, a more knowledgeable Elder answered him: "I very much show them acceptance. It is better for the young to be vain than to be indifferent to spiritual labors. For certainly the young, when they are vain, must of necessity control themselves, remaining watchful, exercising themselves, and seeking to gain love, enduring grievances and seeking constantly the praise of men.

8. "Since, therefore, they conduct themselves in this way, exercising themselves in virtue in order to please men, there will come upon them the Grace of God, Who will say to them in a mystical whisper: 'Why are you laboring for men and not for Me?' And then, overcome by the Grace of the heart, they will be persuaded not to attend to the glory of men any longer, but to seek the glory of God."

The other Elders, on hearing this, said: "Indeed, so it is."

9. A brother said to Abba Poimen: "When I offer a little bread to my brother, or some other small object, the demons pollute my thoughts with the idea that I have done this out of the desire to please men and not out of the virtue of pure love."

To this, the Elder replied: "Even out of a desire to please men, such an offering should still be made to satisfy the needs of a brother."

10. In order to make this point even more clearly, he related the following parable: "Two farmers lived in the same city. One of them worked and planted a few worthless seeds in his field, while the other did not bother to plant anything at all, and ultimately accomplished nothing. Now, when a famine beset the region, who was able to survive?"

11. The brother who had asked the question of the Elder replied: "The one who planted a few worthless seeds."

Then the Elder drew this conclusion: "So, let us do likewise: Let us plant seeds, even if they be few and unclean, that we might not die in soul from the lack of any virtuous work whatsoever."

12. Amma Sarah said: "It is good for us to do charity, even if to have the glory of men. For if, in the beginning, our charity rises from the desire to please men, there will afterwards come that moment when it will become true charity, since it will be pleasing to God."

## Hypothesis XLV

*The Abbot should instruct the weaker of the brothers in obedience, patience, and other ascetic feats by the example of the stronger; and in all things, he should be lenient with the inexperienced.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Agathon greatly loved Abba Alexander, since he was extremely ascetic, moderate of mind, very peaceful, and gentle.

2. Once, now, all of the disciples of Abba Agathon were washing their bulrushes in the river. Among them was Abba Alexander, quietly washing and his work barely visible. The other brothers thus said to their Elder:

"Do you see, Father? Abba Alexander is doing nothing."

Abba Agathon, wishing to correct their thoughts, said to Alexander: "Brother Alexander, make sure to clean the bulrushes well."

3. When he heard this statement, Abba Alexander began to inquire and ask about what the Elder meant by his words, given that he was working carefully.

After a bit, the Elder approached and said to him: "Do not get upset, if you thought that I perhaps did not think that you were doing good work. I said this to you, however, in front of the other brothers, in order to settle their thoughts with regard to obedience."

### B. From St. Ephraim

1. My brothers, a city is built step by step, just as a war is won systematically, according to a plan. By analogy, all things increase little by little until they are completed. It is impossible for one who has not exercised, in time of war, to draw his bow and to fight like someone who is experienced, just as it is not possible for a little child to run like a grown man.

2. If you place in the arms of a young child something which is too

great for his strength, certainly he will suffer harm. And also, should you fail to care for him and instruct him, he will assuredly end up useless and bad.

3. Therefore, the Abbot must direct those who are initiates in the monastic life with discretion, such that he never, with pride, imposes on them ascetic burdens beyond their strength; nor must he ever show indifference before them and ignore their souls. Rather, just as a farmer who plants something in his garden looks after it in every way, so you must do.

4. Keep in mind that such a brother is young and assign him ascetic tasks sensibly and in keeping with his character, remembering always that you, as well, were under submission to a Superior. If he should be ill of body, do not throw him out, but rather work with him, showing great patience with him.

5. The Abbot must know the spiritual strengths and the measure of his disciples, so that he may cultivate every strength in them, but remembering at all times that which the Lord said of those who receive seeds: each within his strength, "some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold" (St. Matthew 13:8).

6. Do not burden those young in age, or in time since coming to the monastery, with heavy asceticism beyond their strength, that they might love your soul and save their own, by the power of the Lord, and that at His Second Coming, "when the chief Shepherd will appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I St. Peter 5:4).

7. To the beginners show forbearance, for all things are possible in God. The beginner who despises humility, however, does not hold in his hands the weapon against the noetic enemies; for this reason, such a one will be greatly beset by the Devil, until he becomes contrite (humble in spirit).

8. An Abbot with common sense should never humiliate a beginner, nor should he demean him when he quarrels with one more experienced than himself; rather, examine with care the reason and essence of the matter, and reconcile them with reverence.

## Hypothesis XLVI

*You should not ask of everyone the same ascetic feats, but only in keeping with the former life of each and according to the strength of each.*

**A. From the *Gerontikon***

1. A rich man once came from Rome and, having become a monk, dwelled in Sketis, near the Church. With him, he had a servant, who looked after him and served him.

2. The Presbyter of the Church at Sketis, seeing the weakness of this distinguished Roman, and being told how comfortably he lived in his homeland, sent to him some of the offerings that were given to the Church.

3. Now, this renowned and rich man, having lived as an ascetic in Sketis for more than twenty-five years, was made famous and enriched by God with the gift of clairvoyant vision. One of the great Fathers in Egypt was informed of this reputation of the man and decided to go to meet him, with the certainty that he would not see anything of the behavior of those who were lovers of the flesh and worldly things. So, when he had entered into the man's cell and embraced him, and having prayed together, they sat down to speak with one another.

4. However, the Egyptian monk saw that the former rich man had a soft *rason* (cassock) and sandals on his feet. As well, he saw that he had woven bedding on which he slept, an animal skin spread out underneath, and a small pillow. All that he saw scandalized him, for in that region no one was accustomed to such a way of life, but only to hardship and austerity.

5. The Elder, being clairvoyant, understood that the Egyptian was scandalized. However, he did not reveal his thoughts to him. Instead, as though to notice nothing, he said to the man who was serving him, "Let us celebrate this day—today's visit from the Abba. Prepare for us, therefore, a festive table." So, the servant boiled a few greens, and they ate at

the appointed hour.

6. During the meal, the Elder took out a little wine, which he used on account of a certain illness, and drank it. When night fell, they read the twelve psalms and then went to bed. After midnight, they arose and prayed until the sun came up.

7. In the morning, the Egyptian said to the Elder: "Pray for me." Having greeted each other, he left, without having been benefited, and set off for his home. The Elder, wishing to benefit him, sent his servant after him and summoned the Egyptian back to his cell.

8. When the Egyptian returned, the Elder asked him: "Father, where are you from?"

"I am from Egypt," he replied.

"From what city in Egypt?" the Elder asked.

"I am not from any city at all, but from a village," the Egyptian answered.

The Elder again asked: "What work did you do?"

"I was a field hand," the man said.

"Where did you sleep?" the Elder inquired.

"In the fields," he replied.

"Did you sleep in a bed?" the Elder asked.

"In the fields, it was impossible to have a bed," the Egyptian answered. "I had no bed at all, but slept on top of the ground."

9. "On the ground?" the Elder asked. "And what food did you eat and what wine did you drink?"

"It was never possible," the Egyptian said, "to find cooked food and wine in the fields."

"But how did you survive, then?" the Elder asked anew.

"I ate dried bread," the Egyptian responded, "and once in awhile bread with salt, if we found some. I drank only water."

"A very severe life," remarked the Elder, afterward asking again: "In your village, did you have a bathhouse in which to bathe?"

"Where would one find such a thing? Whenever we needed to, we went to the river and bathed," the Egyptian replied.

10. After the Elder had learned all of this and saw with what grief and worry the Egyptian had lived prior to becoming a monk, and want-

ing to benefit the man, he commenced relating to him his own former life in the world.

"See me, the humble man before you? I am from the great city of Rome, and I held a high office in the palace of the Emperor."

11. As soon as the Elder began to relate the details of his life, the Egyptian fixed his interest and his attention on him, in order to hear his story. "I left that city," the Elder continued, "and came to this desert. I, whom you now see, had great homes and much money. But I gave up all of that and settled here in this small cell.

12. "Indeed, I had a solid-gold bed which was covered with luxurious bed clothing. Instead of all of those goods, which I forsook for the sake of God, God gave me this bedding and this sheepskin, which you see. My clothing was extremely expensive and worth much; instead of that, I now wear this poor clothing. For my meals, every day a fortune was spent on food and drink, and now God has given me a few greens and this little glass of wine.

13. "In my home, I had many servants to serve me. And look now! Instead of all of those, God gave feelings of sympathy to this old man, so that he would serve me. Instead of the bathhouse, I use a little water to wash my feet—and I wear these sandals, because of my ill health.

14. "Instead of music and lyres, which I then had, I now recite the twelve Psalms. In the course of the night, instead of the sins that I committed then, during my entire repose I observe this small canon [rule—*Trans.*]. I ask you, then, Abba, not to be scandalized by my illness, on account of which my asceticism is not severe and strict."

15. When the Egyptian heard all of this, he sighed deeply and said:

"Woe is me! From all of the grief that I confronted in the world, I came here to rest; and all that I did not then have, because of my penury, I now enjoy in the monastic life. You, however, Elder, left the comforts of a restful life and came to the worries of the monastic life; you fled from glory and riches and entered into humility and poverty."

16. Thus, the Egyptian, greatly benefited from all that he had heard, departed, becoming a friend of the Elder, whom he visited frequently, so as to be edified—for the Elder was clairvoyant and exuded the fra-

grance of the Holy Spirit.

17. Of Abba Arsenios the following incident is told: He once fell ill, and the Presbyters in Sketis had him moved to a cell in the Church. There, he was placed upon a bed and a pillow was placed under his head.

18. In the meantime, one of the Elders of Sketis went to see him; but on seeing him on a bed, with a pillow under his head, he was scandalized and said: "So this, then, is the celebrated Arsenios, and he thus rests?"

19. The Presbyter thus took aside the scandalized Elder and asked him: "What work did you do in your village?"

"I was a shepherd," he said.

"And how did you pass your life?" the Presbyter asked him.

"With great labor and hardship," the scandalized Elder replied.

"How you do get by in your cell, now?" the Presbyter asked.

"Rather comfortably," the former said.

20. Thereupon, the Presbyter said to him: "You see Abba Arsenios here? He, when he was in the world, was a father of kings.* A thousand servants in silk vesture with golden belts were in his service. And he slept on luxurious and expensive bedding. As you see, the food and comforts that he had in the world he does not have here in the skete. As things would appear, he, Abba Arsenios, went from better to worse, while you found comfort."

The Elder, upon hearing this, was contrite and made a prostration, saying: "Forgive me, Abba, I have sinned. Indeed, this is the true path. Your conclusion is most correct: he humbled himself, in embracing the ascetic life, while I came into comfort."

**B. From St. Ephraim**

1. Do not force an older monk to do labor that is beyond his strength, for he has depleted his power in asceticism. To those who fear and revere God, his conscience suffices; that is, he who has grown old in God does not have to do manual labor. Noetic work (prayer and contemplation) is sufficient, along with that which his conscience dictates.

2. Show to those who have aged successfully in Divine work proper respect and honor, to the glory of the Lord and for the benefit of the more prudent brothers around them. When the brothers see you honor the persons of virtuous Elders, they will assuredly make it a point of honor to make progress in their own spiritual struggles.

3. My brother, examine carefully the power of spiritual application and the measure of bodily strength of each of your disciples, having always in your mind the infallible truth which was uttered by the Lord: that "some (cultivate) an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold" (St. Matthew 13:8).

* To the Divine Arsenios the Emperor Theodosios had confided the rearing of his children, Arkadios and Honorios, the later Emperors.

## Hypothesis XLVII

*That we should especially care for the weak and be most accommodating with them in circumstances in which they do not violate some command of God, so that they do not suffer scandal. The successes and sins of each individual are judged according to his strength and knowledge.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Three Elders once visited Abba Achillas. One of the three had a bad reputation.

2. The first one said to Abba Achillas:
"Abba, please weave a basket for me."
"I will not weave a basket for you," the Abba replied dryly.
And the second Elder said, "Be so kind as to weave a basket for me, so that we can have a memento of you at the monastery."
"I do not have time," the Abba answered.

3. Then the third Elder—the one with the bad reputation—said to Abba Achillas: "Abba, weave me a basket, to have something from your hands."
"All right, I will weave one for you," The Abba immediately responded.

4. This piqued the curiosity of the other two Elders, who privately approached the Abba and said: "Why, when we asked you to make a basket for us, did you refuse us, whereas when *he* asked you, you said, 'I will weave one for you'?"

5. The Elder replied: "I said to you that I would not weave you a basket, and have no regrets, since you understand that I do not have time. But if I said this to him, too (that I would not make one for him), he would have said to himself: 'The Elder has been told about my sin and for this reason did not want to fulfill my request.' In this way, that is—by denying his request—I would have immediately cut the bond of

*Abba Achillas*

love and perhaps thrown him into despair. So, my aim was to awaken his soul, so that he would not be swallowed up by sadness."

6. Once, several Fathers visited the home of a Christ-loving and pious man. With them was Abba Poimen. Among the other foods offered, during the meal, was some meat. All of them ate some, except for Abba Poimen.

7. The Fathers were astonished, since they knew with what discretion he behaved. So, when they had eaten and risen from the table, they asked him: "Poimen, why did you do such a thing?"*

8. To this question, Abba Poimen replied: "You ate and no one was scandalized. However, those many who were in my company, had I eaten meat, would have been scandalized, saying: 'Since Poimen ate meat, why should we not do so?'"

When the other Fathers heard this, they were taken by the heights of the ascetic's discretion.

9. A brother once asked one of the Fathers: "Is one defiled in soul when a vile thought comes to his mind?"

In the cell of the Father to whom he posed this question, there were others present. For this reason, a discussion of the matter arose among them. Their opinions differed. Some said that one's soul is polluted by vile thoughts; others maintained that one is not defiled by impure thoughts, as long as these thoughts are not fulfilled by a bodily response—for if a man were to be defiled by a simple thought, then no one would be saved.

10. The brother who posed the question was not satisfied by this uncertainty; so, he retreated to a very worthy and able Elder and asked him to respond to his inquiry. The Elder, after listening carefully, replied: "This—that is, whether one is defiled or not by a vile thought—depends on the spiritual state of each individual. As an example, let us suppose that we had, here, a desirable piece of equipment. Suddenly two brothers come in: one with greater spiritual abilities, the other with lesser.

11. "Now, if the thought of the one of greater spiritual ability were, 'I would like to have this tool,' but he paid no attention to the thought and removed it from his mind immediately, he would assuredly not be

polluted thereby. At the same time, if the brother who has not reached such a high level, should wish this same object and thus occupies himself with that thought, *yet does not take the desired tool*, he, too, is not polluted."**

**B. From St. Ephraim**

My brother, show patience with those who are infirm; for those who are strong do not have need of your aid. In the Holy Gospel, it is written: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" (St. Matthew 9:12). In another place in the New Testament, it is written: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Romans 15:1).

* The intention of this inquiry was to ascertain, why—their having known with what discretion he always acted—he had not eaten from what he was offered, so as not to offend the man showing them his hospitality.

** The "conversation" between the thoughts and the soul, which is described in this text as "colloquy," constitutes that action of the conscience before an act is committed, with reference to doubts about choosing to do it.

## Hypothesis XLVIII

*That we must not immediately oppress with sharp rebukes one who has sinned and is on the verge of despair, but must comfort him tenderly and strive with kindness to raise him from his fall. Likewise, if one has departed from the* cœnobion *and has thereafter returned, we must receive him affably.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother from a *cœnobion* was once slandered, it being said that he had fallen to an immoral act. So, he forthwith took refuge with St Anthony the Great. Shortly thereafter, brothers from the *cœnobion* arrived in order to induce him to repentance and to return with him to the *cœnobion*. They began, however, to interrogate and to accuse him, maintaining that he had, in fact, fallen to an immoral act. The brother, nonetheless, defended himself and said that he had not engaged in such an act.

2. During this discussion, there was present, by coincidence, Abba Paphnoutios Kephalas. When he heard what was transpiring, he related the following parable: "I once saw a man on the bank of the river, where he had sunk into the mud. A number of people ran to help him, but they pushed him even deeper into the mud, up to his neck."

3. When he heard the parable, Abba Anthony said: "Behold a true man, who can cure wounded souls of their sins and save them."

The brothers who had come from the *cœnobion* were convicted by the words of the Elders Paphnoutios and Anthony and made a prostration to the slandered brother. Having been thus settled down and brought to peace by the Fathers, they took the brother with them and returned to the *cœnobion*.

### B. From St. Ephraim

1. If a brother should leave the *cœnobion*, on whatever pretext, and should become ill or return repentantly, you should not reject him or

show him indifference, but receive him with tender concern and love, considering him a member of your body. For indeed, though he may have erred by departing from and abandoning the *cœnobion*, you should nonetheless show him compassion, for the sake of the Lord, Who said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (St. Matthew 25:40).

2. To look after yourself *only* has been prohibited by the Savior in His declaration, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink," and in His following statements (St. Matthew 6:25). The same is commanded by the Apostle Paul with his words: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:4). It is known, too, that the Apostle Paul placed love above all other gifts and achievements (I Corinthians 13:1-13).

3. For while prayer and fasting are good, these things are crowned by charity, in keeping with the Divine Will: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice" (St. Matthew 9:13, 12:7; Hosea 6:6).

4. Heed how the Prophet also scorns those who show no compassion or mercy—behold how he speaks of them: "Because he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy, and one broken in heart" (Psalm 108:16). In yet another place, he says: "For they persecuted him whom Thou hast smitten, and have added to the pain of my wounds" (Psalm 68:27).

5. And the Savior Himself also counsels and commands us to be merciful: "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (St. Luke 6:36). In another place in the Sacred Gospel, He blesses those who show mercy: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (St. Matthew 5:7). Also, we are told, whenever we pray to the Heavenly Father, to say: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (St. Matthew 6:12).

6. So, receive him who has gone astray but repented, if indeed he shows clear and genuine repentance, heeding that which the Apostle counsels, saying: "So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore, I beseech you that ye would confirm your

love toward him" (II Corinthians 2:7-8).

7. In still another passage, he says: "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" (I Thessalonians 5:14-15).

8. And even the King of Glory Himself did not turn away the prodigal son, when he returned, but received him as though he had risen from the dead and clothed him in his former splendid raiment, giving him shoes to wear, bestowing a ring on him, and for the sake of him, the returning prodigal, slaughtered the fatted calf, in order to celebrate and rejoice in the return of the lost son (see St. Luke 15:11-24).

9. And when the other son was disturbed by these displays, He treated him and comforted him with these words: "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (St. Luke 15:31-32).

10. And again you, my brother, whom it has befallen to ask forgiveness and mercy, do not ignore, but rather mimic the son who returned to his father and repented; and bow down before your father and, with humility, sincerely confess your sins and say to him, without hypocrisy: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants" (St. Luke 15:18-19).

11. Fall before him with such fervor and contrition, and having been worthy of forgiveness, be exceedingly watchful for the remaining years of your life to serve the Lord, in fear and humility, every day of your life, bringing to mind the great beneficence that has come upon you.

12. And take care that you do not show humility and quiet only for a short time, yet immediately afterwards show impertinence, shamelessness, and laziness in your work and vigilance. Do not be thankful just today for the food on your table; indeed, if tomorrow the food is not to your liking, do not murmur against the cook or the one responsible for the refectory.

13. Call to mind the Prophet, who says: "For I have eaten ashes like bread" (Psalm 101:10), as well as the vinegar and gall of which the Master Christ tasted, for the sake of our salvation. Reflecting on all of this, eat with gratitude anything that is put forth in the refectory.

14. And to conclude, when you are received back into the *cœnobion*, do not show, for the sake of appearance, momentary self-control, piety, and other virtues, just to give yourself over, later, to indifference and intemperance. Do not, thereby, occasion to bring upon yourself the exasperation of your benefactor, on account of having turned on him after being forgiven, thereby decisively cutting yourself off from the rest of the body (brotherhood) as a rotten member and as an incurably ill person. You will not then be able to find an opportunity to repent and to correct yourself; as the Lord said: "Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (St. John 5:14). It is as though He were saying: "Behold, you have now become well; be careful, therefore, not to sin again, so that nothing worse than the illness which you already had should befall you. Keep in mind that the illness that befell you was the result of your sin; if, then, you should return to the same sin, it is likely that you will destroy your bodily health and that you will lose your soul."

15. Always, with the fear of God, take care to look after, and work conscientiously for, your salvation, so that you will be able to correct your former defeat and be made worthy to enjoy the joy of your Lord, together with all those who please Him.

16. If a brother should leave the monastery on account of warfare in his soul, but returns to restore himself, be careful, when you encounter him, to speak with him in an irenic way, so that you do not add pain to his pain, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). That is, do not let yourself be carried away by hurt and impatience, so that you fall to the same or some other sin.

### C. From the *Gerontikon*

1. There was an Elder who had twelve disciples. It happened that one of them went down to a village on some business and, by the instigation of the Devil, fell into fornication. From that time forth, he became accustomed to this sin and, after the doxology at Matins, would make

his way secretly to the village, returning at daybreak.

2. This filthy habit came to the notice of the other brothers, and then also to the Abbot; but the latter did not immediately rebuke him, but let him be for a time, pretending to be ignorant of the matter.

3. After that, however, the brethren began to criticize the sinful brother openly and to view the Abbot's silence as untimely and the cause of the sinful habit. So, one day the Abbot went early in the morning to the brother's cell. The latter had just returned from the village to which, as I said, he used to go secretly to commit sin.

4. But the monk was in such haste to return that he had put on a woman's overcoat instead of his cloak. In his absentmindedness, when he returned to his cell, he hung it in a corner of the cell, without thinking or taking notice of what it was, since at that very moment he saw the Superior coming and was completely occupied, turning over in his mind what explanation he might give for being away, once the Abbot came in.

5. No sooner did the Abba enter the brother's cell, than he saw the woman's overcoat where it had been hung. He nevertheless said nothing about it, but asked the brother: "Where were you, brother?"

"I went to such and such a place for some work," the brother replied falsely.

"Did you not go to the village?" the Abbot again asked.

"No, Master," said the brother.

6. Then the Abba asked, "And whose overcoat is this?" As soon as the brother saw it and realized it was a woman's overcoat, he fell before the Abba's feet and said, "Forgive me, and I will not do this again."

7. Then the Abba forgave him, raised him up from the floor, and comforted him, saying: "My child, be careful not to sin anymore. For what have you gained through this uncleanness? Not only will you experience scorn and dishonor from men in this life, but you will also inherit eternal fire and the unsleeping worm in the age to come. So I beg you, my child, nevermore to commit this loathsome and shameful deed."

8. The brother was brought to compunction by these words and fell at the Elder's feet once more, moistening them with many tears and wholeheartedly asking forgiveness from God.

9. From that time forth, not only did he cease committing that shameful deed, but he also repented so fervently that he pleased God with his good labors, becoming, in a short while, a most experienced monk. The rest of the brethren, seeing his repentance and toil for God's sake, gave thanks to God.

10. Some time later, the brethren went to the Abbot and asked him to tell them why he did not rebuke the sinful brother, knowing fully well that he had sinned, but had waited so long.

11. And the Elder answered them: "I saw Satan holding him by the hand and leading him to the world, and I, by my forbearance, was holding his other hand, lest, on being reproved, he might immediately flee to the world, where the Devil was drawing him. Now that God has been pleased to save the one whom He fashioned, lo, we have taken hold of his other hand, and he has been wholly saved from sin."

**Commentary of Father Paul, Compiler of the *Evergetinos***

a. Therefore, long-suffering accompanied by prayer is good when we show it toward a brother who is tempted by our common enemy and has fallen into despair. For, when God is many times entreated and has mercy on His creature, He corrects the one at fault and raises him again from his fall.

b. Harshness and censure, to the contrary, when they do not come at a suitable time, aggravate, rather than heal, the wounds of the fallen.

12. A brother who lived in the *cœnobion* of Abba Elias once underwent a temptation; that is, he slipped and fell into sin. Consequently, he was expelled from the brotherhood. He thus went to Abba Anthony on the mountain and stayed with him for some time.

13. Abba Anthony then sent him back to the *cœnobion* from which he had been expelled; but the brethren would not receive him. So he returned, grieving, to Abba Anthony and said to him: "They would not re-

ceive me, Father."

14. Abba Anthony sent him back once more, together with one of his disciples, saying to them the following: "A ship was wrecked at sea and lost its cargo. Only with difficulty did it return to the harbor. And you want to sink that which was saved only with such toil?"

15. On learning that it was Abba Anthony who had sent the expelled brother, they immediately received him.

## Hypothesis XLIX

*That an Abbot must not remain silent when those under his direction sin, but must chastise and reprove them, trying by every means to cure them.*

**A. From the *Gerontikon***

1. Once, Abba Makarios the Alexandrian visited Abba Pachomios of Tabennisi. Abba Pachomios asked him, "In my *synodeia* there are several unruly brothers. What am I to do? Should I punish them?"

2. Abba Makarios replied: "Chastise and judge your disciples rightly; but take care not to judge anyone who does not belong to your *synodeia*. For you must observe the command of the Divine Paul, who wrote to the Corinthians: '[D]o not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth'" (I Corinthians. 5:12-13).

**B. From St. Ephraim**

The staff of an Abbot must never be at rest, but must be used against disorderly and negligent brothers. For only by this means will those who do not wish to bridle their hearts with the fear of God keep themselves from useless and harmful matters, just as a [recalcitrant] slave is corrected [only] by his master's strictness.

**C. From Abba Mark**

1. He who allows his disciple to contradict him to the point that he does not have to do the Abbot's will is thus leading him astray and teaching him to become accustomed to overstepping the limits of obedience.

2. Do not be double-tongued, saying one thing with your mouth and having another in your conscience. For Holy Scripture places a curse upon this sort (*cf.* Ecclesiasticus 28:13, 5:14).

*Abba Makarios the Alexandrian*

3. There are those who speak the truth and are hated by foolish men, and there are those who speak hypocritically and, for this reason, are loved by the same; but none in either of these instances will be slow in receiving recompense from God, for the Lord in due season will render to each that which he deserves.

## Hypothesis L

*That he who sins incorrigibly and brings harm to the brotherhood by his persistence must be expelled if, after appropriate care has been taken to bring benefit to him, nothing is achieved; and that the Abbot must not, out of excessive compassion, allow both himself and the rest of the brotherhood to come to harm.*

### A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Daniel related the following: "When Abba Arsenios was living in Sketis, there was there a monk who had the bad habit of stealing things from the Elders. Abba Arsenios, desiring to win the soul of this monk and to see the Elders left in peace, brought him to his cell.

2. "'Whatever you want,' he said to him, 'I will gladly provide for you; only do not steal anymore.' And so, Abba Arsenios gave him whatever he wanted—money, clothes, and everything for which he asked. Yet the monk continued to steal.

3. "Then the Elders, seeing that he would not correct this shortcoming of his, expelled him from Sketis, saying, 'If a brother shows that he has a shortcoming that does not harm the brotherhood, we must put up with him. But as long as he troubles the brothers and disturbs them, we must expel him, so that the others will not be lost together with him.'"

### B. From St. Ephraim

1. If you are entrusted with the spiritual guidance of a beginner, do not show sympathy toward him more than the Creator requires, whenever he is disgruntled toward the Lord's easy yoke (St. Matthew 11:30), so as not to be dragged down together with him. For one must not be negligent of the ship when the lifeboat has broken away.

2. Let your deeds be always in accordance with the Lord's Will; then you can be assured that you will not fall into the Devil's nets. Do not for-

get that the Devil is accustomed to stealing the works of those who toil by means of snares on the right, accomplishing evil under the disguise of good.

3. If you plead with the Abbot on behalf of a brother who has been expelled from the brotherhood on account of scandal, take care that you do not pester him for the expelled brother's sake; simply exhort him politely, leaving the rest to the Will of God.

4. If, perhaps, the brother has not yet come to realize his error and, by your mediation, he again enters the community and causes harm to the brotherhood, then you will be the cause of ill.

5. A spark, however small, when it falls onto the threshing floor, is capable of incinerating an entire year's harvest. Each of us must then tolerate the weaknesses of his neighbor to the extent that reason demands, and not above measure.* He is blessed indeed who puts up with his neighbor's weaknesses and shortcomings for the sake of love in God; but woe to him whom others show patience, and he yet remains incorrigible.

6. If you acquire a disciple and he, out of negligence and carelessness, estranges himself from the yoke of piety, do not be troubled or let your mind be overcome with grief beyond propriety, lest your soul be tormented and you become unable to benefit him at all. In a circumstance such as this, reflect on the disciple of the Prophet Elissaios (IV Kings 5:20-27).

7. Furthermore, if he falls into great sin, do not grieve above measure, but remember that from among the Apostles themselves came Judas the traitor. Because who is so ingracious and impious as to attribute the cause of His Disciple's fall to the Divine Teacher, and not to the former's evil disposition?

8. For God created man by His own free will. Therefore, to those who strive well, He grants honors and crowns, but to those who transgress and despise His commandments, torments and punishments.

**C. From Abba Mark**

When one man's injury brings harm to many, then neither must we show forbearance nor seek that which is to our own profit, but we must seek whatever brings profit to the many, that they may be saved. Indeed, the virtue of many is more beneficial than the virtue of one.

* "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (St. Matthew 19:19, 22:39; St. Mark 12:31; St. Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; St. James 2:8; Leviticus 19:18).

END OF THE FOURTH BOOK OF *THE EVERGETINOS*
AND TO GOD THE GLORY
❄ AMEN ❄

*Synaxis of the Holy and God-bearing Fathers who shone forth on the Holy Mountan of Athos*

## Glossary of General Terms in Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Christianity*

**Abba:** Aramaic word for "Father," used as a title for monks and other clergy.

**Abbess:** The spiritual Mother of a convent. (See "Spiritual Mother.")

**Abbot:** The spiritual Father of a monastery (often a simple monk). (See "Spiritual Father.")

**Amma:** Feminine form of "Abba," or "Mother," used as a title for nuns.

**Anchorite:** A monastic living in solitude and isolation from other monastics.

**Archbishop:** Bishop of a large or important diocese with the distinction of being an Archdiocese; a Bishop with this honorary title. (See "Bishop.")

**Archimandrite:** The highest rank below that of Bishop, given to a Hieromonk. (See "Hieromonk.")

**Bishop:** The head of a diocese or local Church. In the Christian East, all Bishops, regardless of rank or administrative authority, are considered equal in doctrinal authority. They may not be married at the time of their Consecrations. In ascending administrative rank, episcopal titles are: Bishop, Archbishop, Metropolitan, and Patriarch. In the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Patriarch of Constantinople holds the title of "Œcumenical Patriarch," or "*Primus inter Pares*" (the first among equals). (See "Priest.")

**Brother:** A term for monastics in general; in Eastern Christian tradition, the term is used for novices and by monks and Bishops in addressing one another privately. Formally, unlike in the West, all monks in the East are called "Father," following their Tonsure. (See "Tonsure.")

***Cœnobion*:** A monastic community in which monks or nuns live in a common compound, take meals together, and worship in common. They also hold all things in common and are governed by an Abbot or Abbess or a similar superior.

**Cœnobite:** One who lives in a *cœnobion*.

**Commune:** To partake of the Eucharist. In modern Eastern Christian practice, the Eucharist is administered from the Bread and Wine (Body and Blood), which are intermingled in the Chalice, with a liturgical spoon.

**Confession:** The Mystery of confessing one's sins to a Priest, followed by a prayer of forgiveness or absolution. Also, the sharing of sins or spiritual concerns with

an Elder or spiritual advisor, including spiritual Fathers and spiritual Mothers, though without the bestowal of the formal prayers of absolution.

**Convent:** A community of nuns. (See "*Cœnobion*" and "Skete.")

**Council:** A gathering of Bishops from one or more of the local Orthodox Churches for the purpose of making administrative decisions or examining doctrinal matters. Councils of this kind are often called "Pan-Orthodox Councils." Their decisions are considered binding and valid only when they are in concord with the decisions of the Œcumenical Synods and the traditional doctrines of the Orthodox Church. Councils are sometimes referred to as "Synods." (See "Œcumenical Synod.")

**Deacon:** See "Priest."

**Desert:** Any isolated wilderness area; the sense of isolation cultivated by monastic men or women, regardless of their geographical location.

**Desert Fathers:** An inclusive term for male and female monastics (sometimes called Desert Mothers), usually in reference to the Egyptian desert and the Abbas and Ammas who lived there. (See "Sketis.") The term can be more generally applied to monastics living in any isolated area.

**Eastern Christianity:** Those Christians not belonging to the Christian communities of the West; i.e., who are neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant. Historically, they trace their roots to the earliest Christian communities in the Holy Land and North Africa. The majority of Eastern Christians identify themselves as Eastern Orthodox Christians, who accept the decisions of the Œcumenical Synod of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) and maintain ties to the Patriarch of Constantinople. The members of the various non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches, who reject the decisions of that Synod, are often called "Oriental Orthodox" Christians (which includes the Coptic Orthodox).

**Elder (Gr., *Geron* or *Gerontas*):** A monastic of wide spiritual experience or notable spiritual gifts who offers spiritual advice and guidance to other monastics. Often imprecisely translated as "old man."

**Eldress:** A female Elder.

**Eucharist:** The Body and Blood of Christ, imparted at the Divine Liturgy and in reserved form to the ill and those distant from a Church.

**Fasting:** Refraining from any food or drink, in some cases, or, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, as well as Lenten periods before Pascha (the proper Eastern Christian term for Easter), the Nativity Feast (Christmas), and other Great Feasts, from meat and dairy products and, in most instances, from fish, wine, and oil, too. Though Eastern Christian monastics are normally vegetarians and refrain from eating meat at any time, their fasting practices are also followed by the lay faithful, except for the Monday fast, which is primarily

monastic.

**Gathering (*Synaxis*):** A meeting in which monastics and monastic Elders gather for spiritual instructions or discussions. Also often used to refer to common Church services, including the Divine Liturgy.

**Hesychasm:** Derived from the Greek word for "silence," the word "Hesychasm" refers to an ancient form of inner prayer, practiced widely by the desert Fathers. It centers particularly on the recitation of the "Jesus Prayer" ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner," in its most common form), in conjunction with concentration on the heart (hence, the "Jesus Prayer" is also called the "Prayer of the Heart") and certain ascetic and physical disciplines, as well as the control of breathing, whereby one comes, through the purification of the senses, to a vision of Divine light, or the uncreated Energies of God. This inner cleansing and consequent transformation, in which the mind and the heart find union in Grace, lead to man's deification (*theosis*)—even, to some extent, in this life—by union with the Energies of God (though not with His Essence, which remains ineffable, unfathomable, and beyond man's ken). Enlightenment and divinization in Christ are the ultimate aims of Hesychasm and define, for the Orthodox Christian, human salvation. The writings in *The Evergetinos* describe the struggle for *theosis* in the ancient desert. Hesychastic principles and teachings are also found in the writings of St. Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrios of Pontos, St. Diadochos of Photike, St. Maximos the Confessor, St. Symeon the New Theologian, St. Gregory of Sinai, and St. Nicephoros of Mt. Athos, and those of many other Church Fathers. St. Gregory Palamas, in the fourteenth century, is credited with setting forth this ancient tradition in its fullest form in his lofty apologetic discourses. A collection of writings on Hesychasm—a companion volume, of sorts, to *The Evergetinos*—was compiled by St. Makarios of Corinth and St. Nikodemos and published in Venice, in 1782, as *The Philokalia*. An English translation of this classic of Orthodox spirituality is still in progress; four of the five volumes of the work have been published to date.

**Hesychast:** One who practices Hesychasm. (See "Hesychasm.")

***Hesychasterion:*** A hermitage or a monastic institution dedicated to the practice of Hesychasm. (See "Hesychasm.")

**Hierarch:** A Bishop of any rank.

**Hierodeacon, Hieromonk:** A monastic Deacon or Presbyter, respectively. (See "Priest.")

**Liturgy:** In Eastern Christianity, the Eucharistic service; usually, "Divine Liturgy." Often wrongly called the "Mass," a term unknown in Eastern Christian tradition.

**Metropolitan:** The Bishop of a very large or important diocese with the dis-

tinction of being a Metropolia; a Bishop with this honorary title (usually the President, or chief Hierarch, of a Synod of Bishops). (See "Bishop.")

**Monastery:** A community of monks. (See "*Cœnobion*" and "Skete.")

**Mystery (*Mysterion*):** The proper term, in Eastern Christian nomenclature, for a "Sacrament." While the latter term is used widely by English-speaking Orthodox, it conveys what in Western Christianity is a concept less broad and encompassing than that designated by the word "Mystery." In Eastern Christianity, almost any act which conveys Grace is considered a Mystery, without specifying seven particular "Sacraments" (though this idea was imported into Eastern Christianity from the West, both by imitation and in responding to Western Christian theological thought). Nor, in the East, is a distinction made, as in the West, between the acts and ordinances established by Christ Himself and so-called *sacramentalia*, or Grace that is bestowed *ex opere operato* and Grace bestowed *quasi ex opere operato*.

**Novice:** One who is being tested for the monastic Tonsure, normally for a period of three years. (See "Tonsure.")

**Œcumenical Synod:** A gathering of the Bishops of all of the local and national Orthodox Churches for the purpose of making administrative decisions or defending traditional Orthodox doctrine. The decisions of such Synods, when accepted by the entire Church (seven, and sometimes eight, Synods are considered œcumenical in the Eastern Orthodox Church), are absolutely binding on the Church. All subsequent Councils and Synods must conform to the doctrinal statements of the Œcumenical Synods, which are sometimes referred to as "Œcumenical Councils." (See "Council.")

**Orthodox Christianity:** See "Eastern Christianity."

**Patriarch:** Bishop of a local, national, or regional Church of great historical importance or extensive geographical territory. The Western term "Pope" is synonymous with "Patriarch." (See "Bishop.")

**Priest:** A clergyman ordained by a Bishop to serve a monastic community or a parish. The members of the Priesthood are, in ascending rank, Deacon, Presbyter, and Bishop. All three ranks belong to the Priesthood, though the Presbyter is most often referred to singly by the term "Priest." In the Eastern Church, Deacons and Presbyters may be married or unmarried, though all Bishops are celibate. There are also lower ranks of clergy that are often associated with the Priesthood, including Subdeacons and Readers (Chanters). (See "Bishop" and "Hierodeacon, Hieromonk.")

***Schema:*** This term, from the Greek word for "form," "plan," or "design," is used in the early centuries of monasticism to describe the monastic habit in general (*schema*). There is also a specific garment, the *Analabos*, often called the "*Schema*" or the "Great *Schema*," which is worn by Eastern Christian monastics of the

highest grade, who are called "Schema-monks" or "Schema-nuns." (There are three monastic grades: that of Rasophore, that of the Small *Schema,* and that of the Great *Schema,* though, according to some authorities, monastics of the Small *Schema* and the Great *Schema* properly belong to a single rank.) The *Schema* is draped over the shoulders, hanging down the back, just below the neck, and down the front of the body, as well. It is emblazoned, on the front, with a Cross, the instruments of the Crucifixion, and various letters that refer to Christ and the spiritual powers available to the monk or nun in his or her spiritual struggles. The front part of the Great *Schema* covers the torso, while the front portion of the Small *Schema* is much shorter and covers the thorax.

**Skete:** A small community of monastic hermits, normally comprised of private hermitages (huts or cells) and a Church or Chapel for common worship.

**Sketis (Wadi el Natrun, Wadi el-Natrun, Wadi al Natrun, Wadi al-Natrun):** A valley in the southern part of the Nitrian Desert in Egypt, to the west of the mouths of the Nile River. In the fourth and fifth centuries, especially, but even as late as the seventh century, hundreds of monasteries flourished in Sketis. The name comes from the Greek for "ascetic" and refers to the immense number of ascetic monastics (hundreds of thousands, according to some authorities) who inhabited the area. The term is often loosely, if somewhat inaccurately, used to refer inclusively to what were actually distinct and specific monastic communities in the Nitrian Desert. With the Moslem conquest of Egypt in 641 A.D., the monastic communities of Sketis were destroyed. (See "Skete.")

**Spiritual Father:** In the case of a Priest, a Confessor; in the case of a monk, a spiritual advisor. (See "Confession.")

**Spiritual Mother:** A nun who is a spiritual advisor. (See "Confession.")

**Superior:** An Abbot or Abbess or someone in charge of a monastic community or a ranking clergyman in a parish.

**Synod:** A term often used to refer to a formal meeting of the Hierarchs of a Synod of Bishops.

**Synod of Bishops:** In the Eastern Church, a council of Bishops who administer a local or national Church body, the senior member of which acts as its President; the basic organ of administrative conciliarity in the Eastern Church.

**Tonsure:** The cutting of the hair, by which a novice is formally accepted into monastic ranks. This monastic custom developed in the fourth century and was, contrary to the claims of some authorities, not universally followed in the Egyptian desert, where acceptance into the monastic estate was often very informal.

* This list is not meant to be exhaustive. It essays simply to give the reader some familiarity with Eastern Christian nomenclature, which is often inconsistent and influenced by extraneous traditions. We have also avoided, here, reiterating definitions found in the text or in endnotes, except when further elaboration seemed appropriate.

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